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ABSTRACT

A survey was conducted of adults' participation in Scottish schools in order to update the statistical picture and investigate the schools' views of the advantages and disadvantages of making provisions for adults. Data were gathered from a random sample of 80 schools (20 percent of secondary schools) throughout Scotland with 20 or more adults enrolled through telephone surveys with staff members and a questionnaire completed by 396 of 650 adult students in the schools. All of the adults were participating part time during regular school hours. Some of the findings of the study were the following: (1) Scotland is unique in Europe in the extent to which it promotes adult student participation in secondary schools, with 11,851 adult students enrolled in Scottish schools in 1992; (2) schools saw adults as role models and as contributing to greater job satisfaction for teachers--with few disadvantages; (3) most schools noted distinct needs for guidance and support for adult students, but few had staff trained in that area; (4) adults returned to school at all ages and took a variety of courses; (5) adults students were overwhelmingly female; and (6) most adults reported many gains from their participation in school, especially enjoyment, new knowledge, and new qualifications and skills, and more than half wanted to continued taking courses. Three conclusions were reached: having adult students in schools is an important resource for community development; there should be no distinction between vocational and nonvocational courses in regard to funding; and staff training in adult guidance is needed. (Contains references, a technical appendix, and descriptions of school and adult participant samples.) (KC)

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The Scottish Council

Research in Education

Adults in Schools

Amy Blair
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Adults in Schools

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**The Scottish Council for
Research in Education**

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Within SCRE, Graham Thorpe and his team helped with data analysis, while Janette Finlay was responsible for the final word-processing and patiently tidied up earlier drafts.

The Scottish Office Education Department funded the study, part of a larger research project on adult participation, guidance and progression, a hitherto neglected area of educational research. We are grateful to the Department for its support. The project benefited from the advice and constructive criticism of an Advisory Committee, chaired by Mrs Marian Docherty HMI. The Committee has been unfailingly helpful and meetings have always been productive. We are grateful to members, listed in Appendix D, for sparing the time to attend, to read draft reports and offer comment.

Despite the contribution of many people to the project, the views reported here are those of the authors. They do not necessarily reflect the views of SCRE or SOED.

Summary

This summary identifies the main points arising from the text and indicates the chapters where these points are described and discussed. Chapters 2-4 of the report describe schools' perceptions of adult students while Chapters 5-7 concern adult students' perceptions of their reasons for returning to school, their experience as school students and their gains from this experience. Chapter 8 offers a range of policy implications arising from the research. Chapter 1, as might be expected, sets the scene for the study and contains details of the research design and methods. Further information about these is given in Appendices A-C.

Two points about the sample are worth highlighting. First, school views were elicited from one individual in each school, usually a senior member of staff with particular responsibility for adult students. They are thus the views of senior managers rather than classroom teachers. Secondly, we collected information from 396 adults in 72 schools in seven Scottish regions. Our sample of adults was broadly representative in terms of gender and location (the majority of adults study in schools in Strathclyde). The numbers involved, however, and the time of year when the survey was conducted, suggest caution in generalising from the data. The picture presented is illustrative and we have highlighted common themes and issues which emerge. The existence of strong patterns in the perceptions of adult students suggests that the research is likely to be reporting common experiences rather than idiosyncratic views.

■ Participation patterns

<i>Theme</i>		<i>Chapter</i>
<i>Unique Scottish provision</i>	Scotland is unique in Europe in the extent to which it promotes adult student participation in secondary schools.	1
<i>Numbers of adults participating</i>	In 1992, 11,851 adult students enrolled in Scottish schools.	1
<i>Under-represented groups participate</i>	Those from socially and economically deprived areas and women, in particular, are attracted to school.	1
<i>Number of schools</i>	80% of secondary schools make provision for adults.	1
<i>Variation in adult numbers</i>	The number of adults per school varies widely from under ten to over 1,500. Smaller schools were likely to provide for larger numbers of adults.	1, Appendix B

■ Participation patterns (continued)

Theme		Chapter
<i>Part-time participation dominant</i>	In 1990 there were only 38 adults attending school full-time.	1, Appendix C
<i>Types of courses</i>	Certificated courses dominate with around 60% following such courses.	Appendix C
<i>Subjects studied</i>	Business subjects, home economics, creative and aesthetic subjects are most popular. Least popular are technical subjects, science, and computing.	Appendix C

■ Attracting adults to schools

<i>Wide variety of methods used</i>	Schools used a wide range of methods to attract adults, including local advertising, open days and even a touring jazz band. Both schools and adults themselves reported 'word of mouth' and informal community contacts as the most effective recruiting mechanism.	2
<i>Limited knowledge of alternatives</i>	Adults were able to give positive reasons for choosing schools; frequently, location and type of course were cited. Almost half the sample, however, were unable to name an alternative provider of education.	2
<i>Induction</i>	One third of schools offered no induction programmes for first-time returners. Those schools who did offer induction usually included introductions to key people, tours of school and the provision of literature about their programme.	2

■ Benefits of adults

<i>Adults as learners</i>	Schools saw adults positively. They were typically highly motivated, eager to discuss and brought a wide range of experience to bear on their work.	3
<i>Adults as role models</i>	Adults could emphasise the importance of schooling and improve motivation among pupils. They could help create a better school atmosphere.	3
<i>Job satisfaction</i>	Well-motivated adults could give greater job satisfaction to teachers. There seem to have been few marked changes in teaching methods.	3
<i>Extra training not required</i>	Few teachers had received any training in the teaching of older learners and there was a general perception that this was unnecessary. Thus adults were not seen as disruptive to normal routine.	3

■ Disadvantages of adults

<i>Theme</i>		<i>Chapter</i>
<i>Hard to identify any disadvantages</i>	Almost half the sample were unable to identify any disadvantage from having adults in schools.	3
<i>Teachers' time</i>	Adults could take up more than their fair share of teachers' time and so cause some resentment amongst pupils.	3
<i>Division in community</i>	Schools could be seen as less of a whole community resource if only certain adults participated.	3

■ Guidance and support

<i>Need for specialist training</i>	Most schools reported distinctive guidance needs of adult students. Few staff had specialist training and there were few links with external providers of guidance services. Adults themselves sought help with academic problems. They were less likely to approach school staff about personal or financial matters.	4, 6
<i>Special facilities</i>	Many schools offered facilities such as a common room, free or inexpensive courses and free crèche provision. These were appreciated by adults.	4, 6
<i>Progression links</i>	There were few well thought-out links between schools and other education providers and employers. Adults once in education often wanted more of it. They seldom sought professional guidance when making decisions about future courses.	4, 7

■ Adults who return to school

<i>Wide range of purposes described</i>	Adults returned to school for a variety of personal and instrumental goals.	5
<i>Labelling courses</i>	Adults returning for similar goals did very different courses. In our view it is unhelpful to try to distinguish vocational from non-vocational courses.	5
<i>All ages represented</i>	School learning appeals to adults of all ages. Age was not a predictor of subject choice or level.	5
<i>Gender</i>	Women are overwhelmingly in evidence. Young men are conspicuous by their absence. We speculate that crèche provision and flexibility in timetabling make schools attractive to women.	5

■ Adults who return to school (continued)

Theme		Chapter
<i>Employment status</i>	Most adults in the sample were either at home caring for children or retired. A large proportion of women were in part-time work.	5
<i>Previous educational experience</i>	Negative school experience was not a barrier to return. Most adults had already participated in some form of post-school education prior to returning to school. Their experience challenged conventional notions of progression as meaning participation in successively more intellectually demanding courses.	5
<i>Fitting school in</i>	As expected, school had to compete with family and other demands. For a significant number, however, school was the primary commitment in their lives to which other concerns were subordinate.	6
<i>Mixed lessons favoured</i>	Lessons in which adults and younger students were taught together were preferred to adults-only classes. They were seen as more lively and stimulating.	6
<i>Adults not a homogenous group</i>	Adults of different ages with different learning goals and with different family circumstances go to school. Unsurprisingly, a range of teaching methods was seen as appropriate. The most favoured method was 'talk and chalk' with the opportunity for questions and discussion.	6

■ Gains and progression

<i>Range of gains</i>	Only six people identified one gain. A huge majority identified between four and eight gains.	7
<i>'Soft' gains</i>	Over 90% of adults identified enjoyment as a gain from participation. Many identified increased self-confidence, new friends and interests.	7
<i>'Hard' gains</i>	Nearly 80% of adults identified new knowledge as a gain and many also identified qualifications and skills.	7
<i>Achievement of initial goals</i>	In most cases adults had achieved what they set out to do. The notable exception related to employment. Although 83% had gained qualifications, only 9% had gained a job.	7
<i>Future plans</i>	Almost half the adults wanted to continue doing similar courses. Most adults who had returned in the hope of getting a better job were intending to pursue more education. This is no doubt a reflection of labour market conditions and adults' enjoyment of education.	7

■ Policy implications

These are offered in more detail in Chapter 8. In our view key implications centre upon three areas.

Community development

Schools are an important resource for community development. Schools are successful in attracting under-represented groups but relatively poor at networking with other agencies including the community education service and LECS. Could more be done at regional and divisional level to integrate schools into community development projects? Could Urban Aid and European Funding be used more creatively in these contexts?

Funding courses

Funding which makes judgements about the 'vocational' or 'non-vocational' character of courses is unhelpful. Adults return to the same courses for different reasons. This implies that distinctions made between certificated and uncertificated courses are unfair and could constrain participation. The evident social gains from participation suggest that such constraint is short-sighted.

Training

There is perceived need for specialist training in adult guidance. Only seven of 72 schools had an adult guidance specialist. Our interpretation of lack of demand for guidance is that it is related to the lack of specialist advice. Guidance on progression opportunities and the financial and personal implications of further study is needed.

1 Introduction

Scotland is unique in Europe in the degree to which it promotes provision for adults within the secondary school system. Although there are community schools which accept adult students in other parts of the United Kingdom, the Scottish situation is remarkable in two respects. The first is the extent of adult participation in school classes. In 1992, 11,851 students enrolled in Scottish schools – 4% of the secondary school population – were adults. Eighty per cent of secondary schools make provision for adult students (*Statistics on Adults in Education*), although they vary in the numbers of adult students catered for. Some schools have only a few adults attending, while others have over 1,000. Almost all adults attend school on a part-time basis. The second is schools' success in attracting students from some sections of the adult population which traditionally have shown little interest in returning to education, namely those from socially and economically deprived areas, particularly women.

The demographics of adult participation in Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom are well known (Munn and MacDonald, 1988; Sargant, 1991). McGivney (1990), in her survey of such participation patterns in the UK, USA, and Europe, reports that non-participant groups have altered little in the last two decades. These groups include the aged; urban poverty groups; premature school leavers and those with little education; some groups of women (particularly those who are housebound or from lower socio-economic groups); and unemployed young adults. Their non-participation is caused, in part, by a variety of barriers: situational barriers such as lack of time, money, transport and childcare; and cultural and social barriers which devalue formal educational opportunities. Ironically for this study, these latter barriers are often created and reinforced by school experience. 'People who have ostensibly failed in the school system,' McGivney writes, 'do not wish to repeat that failure' (p 20).

A number of initiatives are currently directed towards encouraging traditionally disenfranchised groups to return. The Scottish Wider Access Programme, for example, seeks to increase participation in higher education by older students and those from socially and economically deprived areas. Community development projects aim to attract young women for the purpose of 'skilling' them for the labour market. Older adults are targeted by education opportunities for the 'Third Age'. Yet schools' provision is proving a powerful incentive to those adults who might not otherwise have returned to education. Her Majesty's Inspectors, in a survey of adults in schools in Strathclyde Region (1992b) concluded that:

Schools were ... remarkably [successful] in attracting back into continuing education members of the community who had been little affected by other educational or re-training initiatives (p 19).

This success appears to be due to schools' efforts to remove many of the institutional hurdles which many adults find difficult to overcome. Courses are

generally free. Many schools also offer free childcare on demand for any adult who requires it. Schools' visibility in the community means that many adults are aware of the provision they offer – and indeed, some adults may be coming to the school for other purposes already. Schools tend to offer a wide range of certificated and non-certificated courses, in which adults can enrol for a variety of purposes. This combination of factors – free, accessible, visible, and relevant provision – has in the last ten years pushed schools into the mainstream of adult education providers in Scotland.

■ Background

The impetus for adults in schools can be traced to the early 1980s, when government at both national and regional level began to see advantages in such provision. It was recognized, for example, that in the course of that decade the secondary school population in Scotland would fall by almost a third, necessitating more limited curricula; reductions in staff; and, in some cases, the closure of schools. Opening schools to adults who were keen to return to education was one way of maintaining student numbers and avoiding closure or redundancies.

At the same time, central government argued that the production of a flexible and adaptable workforce was essential for the demands of an advanced market economy. The need for adults to return to education was stressed, so they could upgrade their knowledge and expertise and develop new, more 'marketable' skills. To achieve this, providers of adult education were themselves encouraged to become more flexible; develop new courses and methods of teaching and assessment; and target those sections of the population reluctant to return to traditional forms of adult provision. These groups were felt to be the ones with most to gain from the new initiatives. Their entry or re-entry into the work-force was seen as an essential measure to counter the predicted effects on industry of falling numbers of school leavers.

A third factor contributing to increased provision for adults in schools was a more radical desire, among educationalists and community activists in particular, to create what has been described as a 'learning society' (Ranson 1992). According to this philosophy, providers of education need to become more responsive to the needs of the community which they serve and, at the same time, promote greater responsibility in their students towards the community. In this way, education becomes a force for social change rather than a means of preserving social norms. Schools were ideally placed to promote this vision because they serve a well-defined local community and have a long tradition of support and guidance for the individual learner. As Her Majesty's Inspectors noted in their survey of provision for adults in Strathclyde schools (HMI, 1992b), that Region's initiative to encourage adults to return originated with 'headteachers and staff [who] believed that a community approach to education could help to reverse historic patterns of disadvantage' (p 2). Their aims were to ensure access to provision for those who could not afford other forms of adult education and encourage everyone in the community to consider education as a way of helping them to 'discover and/or to develop their talents for any reason or purpose.' (Strathclyde Regional Council, 1984).

These three factors provided the *stimulus* (the need to avoid closures and redundancies); the *means* (adult provision in schools has been jointly financed by

central government and regional authorities); and the *vision* (a form of education in tune with community needs and aspirations) to prompt many schools to admit adult students. Clearly, they addressed a previously unmet need: throughout the 1980s, the number of schools open to adults and the numbers of adults taking advantage of school provision rose steadily. Between 1984 and 1989 the number of adults in school rose by almost 10,000 to 14,009 (Scottish Office, 1992).

Recently, however, the adult population in schools has stabilized: in 1991, 14,243 were counted (Scottish Office, 1993). It is not certain whether this represents a natural levelling off, now that provision is widespread, or a response to the changed economic circumstances of the 1990s, in which, contrary to expectations, the work-force is contracting rather than expanding, and where the market economy, ironically, is now forcing a number of schools to charge for adult provision.

■ Previous research into adults in schools

There has been little research to date in Scotland into the nature of provision, the patterns of participation, or the policy implications of the remarkable growth in numbers of adults returning to school. Two recent studies, however, have laid the groundwork for our own research. These examined statistical data and the nature of the experience – for both schools and their adult students.

Bannister (1990), in a short and predominantly statistical report, used existing figures to describe the extent of adult participation in Scottish schools and identify the characteristics of adult students. Her findings revealed that in 1990, 4% of the national school population was composed of adults and that 75% of Scottish schools accepted adult students. She established that a 'typical' adult school student at that time was likely to be aged between 35 and 44, female, and studying part-time on a certificated course in either English or business studies. One of the aims of our own research was to update and expand this statistical picture. Current participation patterns are reported in Appendices B and C.

More recently, HMI published a report (HMI, 1992b) of their inspection of ten schools in Strathclyde Region which made provision for adults. The inspection aimed to evaluate the schools' provision for adults and assess the impact of adults on 12-18 year old pupils in these schools. The inspectors observed over 100 classes in which adults were taught and talked to substantial numbers of staff and students. They concluded that widening provision to include adults had been a highly successful development, benefiting adults, younger students and the wider community. We were interested to discover whether our study, which involved a considerably larger number of schools and students, would produce similar conclusions and, if so, identify the factors responsible for this success.

A study of adult participation across four formal educational sectors including schools, recently completed by the authors of this report, had provided certain indications of what these factors might be. The study (Blair et al, 1993) was based on in-depth interviews with 50 adults (ten of whom were from schools), investigating their views on a range of aspects relating to their return to education. These included their reasons for participating, their goals, the kinds of formal and informal support and guidance they received at different stages, and their achievements. In the course of the research we were able to identify a number of advantages in school provision, from our informants' perspectives. These included:

- the fact that schools are local and therefore easily accessible;

- the vital importance of free or low cost crèche provision for carers of pre-school children;
- a well-developed system of support and guidance for those returning to education for the first time, particularly for those who found the prospect daunting or confusing;
- timetabling which fitted in with domestic commitments;
- free classes or low fees.

Our findings in this study were limited in terms of generalisability due to small sample size. We therefore hoped to discover how far data from a larger sample of both adults and school staff would confirm our conclusions. The findings from this earlier study are referred to in more detail throughout the text of this report.

■ The aims of the research

This is the first survey of adults' participation in Scottish schools. Our aims were to update and expand the statistical picture provided by Bannister and investigate in more detail the experiences of adults who had returned to schools and schools' own views of the advantages and disadvantages of making provision for adults. More specifically we were interested in schools' views of:

- the nature of the provision available;
- ways in which to attract students, and how effective these are deemed to be;
- the nature of the support and guidance offered to adults when they return to school; in the course of their studies; and at the point when they are considering progression to other forms of education or employment;
- the differences between teaching adults and younger students, and consequently, the need for training to teach adults;
- the influence of regional policy on provision.

From adults, we sought to discover:

- the reasons they had decided to return to education, and the reasons they had chosen school rather than other educational providers;
- what they hoped to achieve as a result of returning to school;
- how they had come to hear of school provision;
- the kind of support and guidance they had received at all stages of their courses;
- their plans for the future – in terms of further education or employment goals.

■ Methodology

In order to reach a representative number of schools and students, we contacted a random sample of 80 schools (20% of secondary schools) throughout Scotland with 20 or more adults on the roll. We invited the member of staff with responsibility for adults in each school to take part in a telephone survey in which we would investigate staff views on adults provision. In addition, we asked these individuals to contact ten adult students in the school, again at random, and ask them to complete a questionnaire on their experiences of return. Details of the way in which the sample was drawn and the survey was carried out are included

in the Technical Appendix. As is normal in a survey of this size, a number of students, and some members of staff were unable or failed to participate. The final sample included individuals with responsibility for adult education in 72 schools and 396 adult students in 75 schools.

Our previous study (Blair et al, 1993) of participation in adult education had been qualitative. We were therefore alert to the dangers of over-simplifying the issues surrounding adults' reasons for returning and the choices they make which can sometimes be the result of larger scale studies where there can be a tendency to typify motivation for participation and build a portrait of a typical adult student. Consequently, we aimed to avoid falling into this trap in our questionnaire and telephone survey design. Details of the questionnaire and survey design are included in the Technical Appendix. For the moment it is necessary to highlight only the opportunities given to adults to identify a large number of reasons for their participation and their intended gains from participation.

We also wanted to ensure that the analysis of the data we collected drew on the more complex and detailed approach to adult participation which we had developed in our earlier work (to which readers with an interest in the more theoretical aspects of this question are referred). Indeed, we have used our model of participation – as the unpredictable product of the interplay of conditions (both adults' life circumstances, and the availability and accessibility of suitable educational provision) and goals – as one of the major interpretative structures for this report. This model is discussed more fully in Chapter 5.

■ Interpreting the data

It should be noted that we interviewed adult *participants*, and can only speculate as to why other adults choose not to complete their courses. Readers' attention is also drawn to the fact that the data were collected in May and June, during schools' summer term. At this time, many students are given study leave to prepare for public examinations. Our student sample, therefore, represents only those adults who were in school at the time our questionnaire was distributed. It may be that our sample is unrepresentative of adults in school at other times of the year. As our sample is large and randomly drawn, however, we believe that our findings have relevance across Scotland and the United Kingdom. A summary of the key characteristics of the sample is provided below. Full tables are provided in Appendices B and C, together with comparisons with national statistics.

During analysis, statistical significance was determined using Chi-squared tests. Differences were deemed to be significant at the 5% level. This means that the probability of results arising by chance is extremely low.

■ Key characteristics of the sample

The schools

One member of staff from each of 72 schools was interviewed. In each case, this was the individual identified as having responsibility for adult education in the school. The position of this person varied widely from provider to provider: sometimes the headteacher took direct responsibility, while on other occasions

the task was delegated to other members of staff. Some of these included adult provision among many other responsibilities, while for others, adult education was a sole or principal responsibility. Details are shown in Table 1.1, below.

Table 1.1 Titles of members of staff with responsibility for adult education

	number interviewed (n = 72)
Assistant headteacher	31
Depute headteacher	11
Assistant headteacher (with responsibility for adults)	7
Headteacher	4
PT/APT with subject or guidance responsibilities	4
Senior teacher (unspecified responsibilities)	4
Vocational co-ordinator	2
Senior community education worker	2
Continuing education network co-ordinator	2
Head of community and adult education	1
Senior teacher (with responsibility for adults)	1
Community liaison teacher	1
Adult education co-ordinator	1
Project worker (Wider Access to School)	1

The schools these individuals represented varied widely (see Appendix B for full tables). The key characteristics of the schools follow:

- The regional spread of schools reflected the national picture of adult participation, in which Strathclyde Region is the principal provider. Although the 72 sample schools were located in seven Scottish Regions, Strathclyde dominated the sample with 55 schools. Our sample also reflects the fact that much adult provision emerged from initiatives to set up community schools in areas of social and economic deprivation. In total 13 of our sample schools had 30% or more of school age pupils receiving free school meals. Twelve of these were in Strathclyde and one was in Lothian.
- There is considerable variation in the size of schools catering for adult students, both in relation to student numbers overall, and the number of adults attending classes. One of the sample schools had 16 adult students, while another had 1,725.
- Factors which had originally encouraged schools to extend their provision to adult students included regional policy; the recognition by school staff of an unmet need for adult provision in the community served by the school; and, more pragmatically, the threat posed by falling school rolls to course provision, staff numbers and, ultimately, to the existence of the school.

The students

Questionnaires were completed by 396 adults from 75 schools. The breakdown of their age and gender is shown in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 The ages and genders of the adult participants in the study sample

	16-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56+	total %
% women	5	21	26	8	22	82
% men	2	2	3	1	10	18
total %	7	23	29	9	32	100

We have noted that a number of claims have been made for schools' ability to attract students from groups which traditionally have been reluctant to return to education. Our sample confirmed many of these assertions: a high proportion of the students were female (many with domestic responsibilities) and/or students over the age of 45. Though we were unable to establish directly the proportion of students from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, a substantial number of the schools in the sample were located in areas of deprivation. It was clear too that the schools in the sample had succeeded in attracting those with negative experiences of school the first time around, and those who had originally left school with few or no qualifications.

All of the adults in the sample were participating part-time during school hours. Although many were attending classes every day, the largest group (34%) were coming into school one day per week for one to three hours. This situation is discussed more fully in Chapter 6. Readers are alerted here, however, to the fact that the views of the adults are likely to have been influenced by the nature of part-time provision, and that the conclusions we have drawn may not be applicable to those participating full-time. We have drawn readers' attention to this issue in relevant text throughout the report.

Most of the students in our sample were taking certificated courses: either SCOTVEC modules, or courses leading to Higher or Standard Grade qualifications. The most popular subject areas were information technology, word processing and office skills.

■ The report

This report consists of eight chapters, of which this is the first. In Chapter 2, we introduce both sets of data – from schools and from adult participants – and look at ways in which adults are initially attracted to schools and the reasons adults have for choosing certain schools over other providers. Chapters 3 and 4 consider the data from the interviews with school staff. Chapter 3 considers staff views of the characteristics of adult learners and the ways in which they influence teaching methods, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of making provision for adults. Subsequently, the nature of the support and guidance which schools provide for adults, at every stage of their school experience, is considered. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 examine the data from the adult questionnaire. In Chapter 5, we describe the students' backgrounds and the circumstances which have prompted them to return to education, and what it is that they hope to achieve

from participation. The subsequent two chapters consider adults' experiences once they have returned to school. Chapter 6 examines the personal and institutional factors that help adults to accommodate their studies; the various teaching and learning strategies adults encounter in lessons; and the nature of the support and guidance they receive. Chapter 7 describes the gains adults made and their plans for the future. We close the report with a discussion of the policy implications of our findings.

2 What attracts adults to schools?

A host of external circumstances or 'supply side' conditions affects whether or not adults are able to return to education. These conditions include the availability (and indeed, information about the availability) of suitable educational opportunities and guidance to help route adults towards appropriate providers. Providers must also welcome adults who are uncertain about their participation, to ensure that they feel confident enough to pursue their goals. These conditions can be as crucial as any when adults are seeking to return. A woman with young children, for example, may be keen to gain qualifications for re-entry to the labour market. It is quite possible that her local community high school offers courses to suit her requirements and has a crèche. If she does not *know* about this provision, however, or if the school does not answer her queries in a prompt and friendly manner, the other positive circumstances in her life that might lead her to return are nullified.

This is clearly a two-way transaction. Adults' knowledge of educational opportunities is determined, to a certain extent, by the degree to which providers market themselves in the local community. Does the school in the above example target women returners? Is the crèche well-advertised or does the school rely upon its reputation in the local community for attracting adult students? It is only when the methods adopted by schools are in harmony with potential returners' needs that the interests of both will be met.

How far do schools adopt strategies to recruit adult students? How successful are these strategies in increasing the number of adults who attend classes? To answer these questions, it is necessary to examine both sets of data – from the schools and from the adult students themselves – in order to identify the degrees of match and mismatch between providers' and adult students' perceptions.

We found that schools varied considerably in the extent to which they were actively involved in targeting adult returners and marketing their provision: some took what was essentially a passive role whilst others showed considerable initiative in the methods they used. The views of the adults themselves reflected this: whilst most had heard about their school's provision from friends or relatives, potential students welcomed any initiatives that alerted them to possibilities of which they had not been previously aware.

We now turn to a discussion of the ways in which schools tried to attract adult students, together with respondents' own recollections of the ways in which they had first heard about their schools and their reasons for choosing them over other alternatives. The chapter closes with an examination of schools' and adults' views of initial contact with each other. We remind readers that the school data was collected through interview with one key member of staff in each school. These were individuals with responsibility for adult provision and were therefore the people most likely to be knowledgeable about relevant issues. It is

important to remember, however, that the 'school data' are a collection of individuals' views that may or may not have been shared by other members of staff.

■ Attracting students

Schools' views

The schools in the sample used a variety of methods to attract adult students. Some methods were common to many. Others were unique to individual institutions, having been developed in response to particular circumstances and needs. The most popular methods of attracting students were by word of mouth; local advertising; and reliance on local adults' long-standing awareness of the existence of the school. Clearly, most schools see themselves primarily as serving the local community – and devise marketing strategies with the area's residents in mind. None of the schools in the sample indicated that it sought to attract students from further afield.

Table 2.1 Methods of attracting adult students

	Schools (n = 72)	
	number	%
by word of mouth	72	100
through local advertising	68	94
through reliance on adults' local knowledge	67	93
through liaison with outside agencies (Community Education, Social Work department, etc.)	58	81
through media advertising	53	74
through Open Day/Week	52	72
through crèche provision	46	64
through community activities in the school building	43	60
through outreach work	39	54
by setting up clubs	20	28

It is unsurprising that word of mouth was listed by all the schools as one of the ways in which adults came to hear of the provision available. It is to be expected that adult students talk to their friends and acquaintances of their experiences in the school, and that new students are attracted in this way – particularly if existing students' experiences have been positive and they describe their achievements with enthusiasm! It is difficult to say, however, how far schools which rely upon word of mouth can be said to be *attracting* students, as their role in this kind of promotion is a relatively passive one.

Local advertising was the second most frequently reported marketing method, adopted in all but four schools. Examples given by respondents varied widely, from door to door leafleting and notices in local shops, churches, libraries and so on; to individual, and, in some cases, highly imaginative ways of attracting attention. One school had a bus with a jazz band aboard which toured the area, publicising the school's adult programme, whilst another had made a promotional video which played in the local library.

Some of the methods schools used to attract adults required greater commitment on the part of school staff than others. Outreach work, for example, requires time set aside for this purpose; and the organisation of an Open Day or an Open Week is likely to make demands on the energies of most of the school's staff. These 'active' publicity methods were, nevertheless, reported as being used by more than half of the schools in the sample. Analysis revealed that these methods were more likely to be used by schools with large numbers of adult students, suggesting that the more adults the school aims to attract, the more likely it is to be proactive in seeking out likely candidates.

We also found that each of the strategies in the list was more likely to be reported by schools where some of the staff had specialist training in adult education. This suggests that although 'specialist' schools are well aware that informal methods (such as word of mouth, reliance on adults' long-term knowledge of the existence of provision, or the expectation that adults who are involved in community activities in the school building will be drawn into adult classes there) are the most widespread and effective stimuli, they also recognise the importance of sustaining a high profile in the community by engaging in a wide range of promotional activities.

We also asked our respondents which of the methods they felt to be the most effective and why. Word of mouth once again topped the list, for two reasons. Respondents believed that friends passing on their own positive experiences of adult education act as a powerful incentive to others. They also reported that peer support had an important role to play in encouraging adults to return to education for the first time. Interestingly, four respondents reported that their schools had carried out their own surveys to determine the most effective methods of attracting students, and in every case, word of mouth had emerged as the most successful.

Adults' views

The evidence from the questionnaire to adult students confirms this view. Informal contacts and schools' presence in the community were by far the greatest factors contributing to adults' hearing about what they had to offer.

Table 2.2 Ways in which adults found out about their school

	% of respondents (n = 396)
heard about the school from friends/relatives	38
had always known about the school	25
saw adverts or heard about it on the radio	21
children went there	15
had attended the school as a pupil	10
outreach	9
found out at community/job centre	4

The strength of this evidence in favour of informal contacts raises a dilemma for providers: though remaining aware that student demand for adult provision will be heavily influenced by current students' level of enjoyment and satisfaction with their courses, schools can do little which will have a direct effect on the

student grapevine except try to ensure that adults' school experience is positive. Outreach work, however, can be seen as one way of developing a more sophisticated and informed 'grapevine': we have noted that many of the schools with relatively large numbers of adult students have developed outreach strategies. Schools which aim to expand their adult population might like to consider implementing such programmes as a way of capitalising on the effectiveness of word of mouth. If adults know about school courses near their home this is often sufficient for them to choose schools in preference to other providers, as we shall see in the section on *making choices*. Saturation publicity – leaflets through letterboxes, in shops and other public places and advertising in the media – is perhaps the most effective way of spreading the message that schools have something to offer adults of all ages and stages.

Targeting

Schools which feel they can provide benefits for particular groups (such as parents of pre-school children or unemployed people) can target them with publicity, information and offers of support. Such targeting may be felt necessary either because schools are aware that there is demand for provision which addresses the needs of a particular group in the area, or because they are concerned that groups of people who could benefit from what the school has to offer are not enrolling. In some cases, the school may be able to obtain additional funding if they are addressing the educational needs of particular people.

When we asked respondents to tell us whether they targeted certain groups; 49 of the 72 indicated that they did. (However, some caution in the interpretation of this data is necessary as it appears that some respondents understood 'targeting' to mean that large numbers of these particular groups attended the school. There was also, possibly, some confusion between targeting and advertising: one interviewee, for example, reported 'targeting a local nursery school'.) The following table shows that women with pre-school children were the most commonly targeted group, followed by women returners:

Table 2.3 Targeting specific groups of students

target groups	schools which targeted groups (n = 49)	
	number	%
women with pre-school children	36	74
women returners	30	61
older students	22	45
people with special needs	15	31
unemployed men	12	25
recent former pupils	12	25
people from minority ethnic groups	11	25

The fact that women with pre-school children and women returners are the two commonest target groups is of considerable significance. As we have seen, the

literature on adult education, as well as countless reports on adult provision in recent years, have identified women with young children (and other domestic responsibilities) as being one of the groups least likely to return to education (McGivney, 1990; Sargant, 1991; Munn and MacDonald, 1988). If such women do tend to attend school classes (and we shall see that this is the case in our own sample), then schools are clearly successful in offering suitable provision to a neglected group of potential returners. However, it is important not to conclude from this that schools should aim their provision exclusively at such women. Our previous research concluded that 'assuming that certain types [of learners] will be attracted to particular types of provision is unhelpful' (Blair et al, 1993, p 91) because even people who seem to have similar life-circumstances and similar goals can make very different educational choices. We shall discuss this matter further in Chapter 5 on participation.

Consequently, the argument put forward by some of the respondents who did not target is worth taking into account. These individuals argued that the targeting of certain groups was a restrictive practice: 'None are targeted. All are welcome,' was one respondent's comment. However, analysis revealed that such schools tended to have relatively low numbers of adult students overall. As we saw in the previous section, schools with higher numbers of adult students tended to look for more proactive methods of attracting them, and it may be that targeting, in this context, is seen as a valuable adjunct to other more 'global' methods.

We were interested in knowing whether schools received external funding for particular targeted groups. In fact, this was relatively rare: only 26 of the schools in our sample reported that they received external funding for specific target groups.

Table 2.4 Groups of students for whom the school receives special funding

	number of schools (n = 26)
women with pre-school children	21
women returners	6
older students	2
people with special needs	2
people from minority ethnic groups	2
unemployed men	1
recent former pupils	1
other groups	2

The majority of these schools received funding for women with pre-school children, and we assume that the considerably higher figure attached to this group relates to crèche provision, as all 21 schools had crèches. Indeed, a number of these respondents specifically described crèche provision as a resource aimed at attracting women with pre-school children.

Two schools mentioned more specialist target groups such as teenage mothers; sufferers of long-term illnesses and their carers; and women with low self-esteem.

It appeared that these schools provided special courses for the groups and that external monies or resources were made available for this provision. In addition, two schools with large adult student numbers and comparatively small numbers of younger students indicated that in fact they targeted younger students (though without funding for this purpose), trying to encourage them to join classes where most students were adults!

■ Making choices

We know, then, that most adults found out about their school's provision through their informal contacts in their local community and that schools relied on these contacts for publicity. The knowledge of a provider's existence, however, is not necessarily sufficient reason for adults to choose it over other possible alternatives. What factors do adults take into account when faced with such a choice?

In our qualitative study, we found that for most adults, this choice did not exist. The majority were unable to make an informed decision about the providers and courses that were best suited to their needs because they were unaware of the alternatives open to them. Although adults were often able to give quite positive reasons for their choices (such as appropriate courses or a 'friendly atmosphere') very few had made systematic enquiries on which to base their decision. Adults relied upon their own local knowledge and that of their friends and relatives: if this led them to a provider where they could satisfactorily pursue their studies, then all well and good. Adults tended to be satisfied with their choices because they had little basis for comparison. Few respondents looked for formal guidance to help them decide on an appropriate provider.

In this large sample, then, we were interested in discovering why respondents had chosen the school they were attending and how far they had been knowledgeable about the alternatives open to them. We sought to delve behind the positive reasons adults give for provider choice by establishing how far respondents' choice had, in fact, been limited by a narrow knowledge base or stringent personal circumstances. We also wanted to know about the guidance adults had received when making their decision to return.

Choice of provider

We presented respondents with a list of possible reasons for choosing their school, and asked them to tick as many as they felt applied to them (see Table 2.5). The majority of adults, 225, either had only one reason or were able to identify the most important reason. The most common reason adults gave for their choice of school was that it offered appropriate courses – this was also the only or most important reason in 28% of cases.

Most of the respondents were able to identify positive reasons for their choice of provider. Clearly, one of schools' great strengths as providers was their profile in the community: adults chose them because they were near to home and had been recommended by friends and relatives. We found in our qualitative work that these two factors working together – local knowledge of providers and favourable reports from trusted friends – were often enough to steer adults towards certain providers (and cause them to cease investigating alternatives). Schools cannot alter their location but they can ensure that their profile in the community is prominent – and that their adult students have a positive enough

experience that they want to tell their friends about it! The fact that school courses are often inexpensive or free is important to many adults. Finally, the facilities schools can offer adult returners – crèches, most notably – are often vital in facilitating return. Evidence from our first study suggests that these last two characteristics – free courses and childcare on demand – distinguish schools from other providers (such as colleges) in the minds of adults. Adults often *perceive* that college courses are expensive or that college crèche places are rare, whether or not this is the actual case.

Table 2.5 Respondents' reasons for choosing their current provider

	overall % (n=396)	most important reason % (n=225)
had appropriate courses	71	28
near to home	61	22
recommended by friends/relatives	32	7
courses were affordable	23	6
school had good childcare facilities	19	23
pervious experience as adult student	17	2
previous experience as younger pupil	13	3
outreach	12	2
attracted by advertising	12	2
had been attending school for other reasons	9	2
went along with friends/relatives	7	2
unaware of alternatives	4	1

Only four per cent of respondents stated that they were unaware of alternative venues for their return. This number seems low, and implies that the sample was well-informed about the choices open to it. We were conscious of the possibility that a seeming awareness might, in fact, conceal a lack of knowledge. We therefore asked respondents to name, if possible, an alternative provider where they might have pursued similar courses to those they were following at school. Almost half the adults (47%) were unable to do so. Choice, then, appears to have been much more limited than at first appeared to be the case. Of the 209 adults who could name an alternative, 76% named another school or college whilst a further 13% wrote merely 'school' or 'college' without specifying particular providers. Only three per cent named community education providers.

We asked this group to state why they had chosen their current school over the other provider because we wanted to see if there were any structural or institutional characteristics adults seemed to appreciate if they had choices open to them. The largest group (37%) said they chose their school over alternatives because it was closer to home. Table 2.6 shows the most common reasons.

The fact that school classes were held during the day – and particularly during school hours – was seen as an important benefit to mothers with children. Again, the availability of a crèche was viewed as vital to about one in ten respondents. Fewer adults cited such reasons as 'friendlier staff' or other ephemeral provider qualities. Interestingly, three per cent of respondents chose schools rather than colleges because they felt teachers in schools had better training and that their own participation would be enhanced as a result. Other reasons were cited by

only a few respondents: employment by provider; the provider's good reputation; and the school's superior facilities. It is clear that for the most part, schools are chosen for characteristics that they can do little about – that are almost automatic by virtue of their merely being schools. The exception to this is the provision of childcare for young children: schools who make this investment in resources can greatly increase their student numbers – perhaps at the expense of other providers.

Table 2.6 *Respondents' reasons for choosing their current school over an alternative provider*

	% of respondents (n = 209)
school was closer to home	37
class times were more suitable	14
crèche available	11
previous association with school	7
school offered superior courses	6
staff were more friendly and helpful	5
school was less expensive	4
teachers at school are trained	3
children at the school already	3

■ Induction

Knowledge of providers is just one condition necessary to facilitate adults' return to education. A further condition is the support available to potential returners after they have made their choice. How can providers retain adults who hesitatingly come through the door? We know that induction is of great benefit to new adult students, particularly if they have been away from education for some time and are not familiar with current courses or are lacking in confidence (Lowden and Powney, 1993; Rivas, 1992; Alexander and Steward, 1988). Adults who return to school can also feel considerable trepidation in approaching an institution which may represent earlier negative experiences or perceived past failures, and it is important to ensure that fears, concerns, and the need for information are dealt with at the outset. We therefore asked providers whether an induction programme of any sort was provided for adults starting courses at the school and, if so, to describe the programme. We also asked the adult respondents what sorts of contact they had experienced with their schools before starting classes.

Schools' views

In all, 51 schools provided some form of induction for their new adult students, the most common features of which were an introduction to relevant subject staff, the provision of literature about the school and a tour of school facilities.

Of the three most commonly-cited activities, introducing new students to subject staff is probably the most valuable to adults: subject staff are the main point of students' contact with the provider and an important source of information and general guidance (see Chapters 4 and 6 for a full discussion). Providing a tour

of the facilities and literature about the school are also helpful, though only if in conjunction with other, more focused activities. Literature alone does not constitute an induction *programme*, as in our previous qualitative study, a number of respondents told us that they often found such literature confusing and difficult to interpret. It is therefore a positive finding that only one school listed the provision of literature as the sole component of its induction programme.

Table 2.7 Content of schools' induction programmes

	schools (n = 51)	
	number	%
introduction to subject staff	45	88
provision of literature about the school	45	88
tour of school	45	88
introduction to other adult students	29	57
introduction to guidance staff	22	43
interview	7	14
information relating to progression	4	8
taster courses	4	8

Very few schools included interviews with staff in their programmes. Our previous work demonstrated that this was one of the most effective methods of induction from participants' viewpoints – and that those who were not given the opportunity of an interview felt they would have benefited from the guidance and advice they might have received in such a situation. Providers can also make use of initial interviews by using the opportunity to gauge students' interests and prior educational experience. Such information can be most useful when placing students on appropriate courses – and we know that students following courses relevant to their needs and abilities are more likely to complete their studies. Schools might wish to consider whether interviews with prospective adult students could possibly be accommodated by staff, as the information exchanged in such a situation can be beneficial for both parties. It is noteworthy that most provision under the Scottish Wider Access Programme includes initial interviews between potential students and a guidance tutor. These have been reported almost universally helpful (HMI, 1993; Munn, Johnstone and Robinson, 1994).

Almost a third of the sample (21 schools) did not offer induction programmes to their adult students. Most of these (13 schools) reported that they lacked the resources necessary for such a programme, or that induction was too time-consuming. We wonder if this is a false economy. It is clear that adults who return to school feel particularly in need of institutional support for their participation. Indeed, many in our previous study told us that without such support they would not have had the confidence to enrol in classes. Schools that do not provide induction consequently risk losing students before they even commence lessons, and it is likely that a number will also drop out early on because they feel unsure of themselves and their role in the school. Perhaps some of the income which comes to schools as a result of adult participation could be devoted to induction.

As schools become more responsible for their own budgets under devolved management schemes, it may be that issues concerning the resourcing of adult students assume a higher profile.

Adult students' views

If adults did not make use of formal guidance networks for choosing their provider, how did they make first contact with their schools to decide the courses they would do? Did formal guidance networks take over at this stage, once adults had come through the front door? Most adults reported that they had opted for an informal, personal approach.

Table 2.8 *Respondents' first method of contact with their current provider*

	% of respondents (n = 396)
dropped in at the school	41
had an interview	33
'phoned school	29
attended Open Day	27
no contact before classes began	11
friend/relative found out about courses	2
couldn't remember	2

We know from our earlier study that personal contact with providers at the early stages of return often resulted in more satisfactory decision-making and increased confidence. Although we cannot tell from the data with whom adults spoke when they 'dropped in' or had an interview at the school, it is heartening to see that so many adults had such personal contact before their courses began. This is consistent with the sorts of activities schools said they included in their induction programmes. Indeed, we found in our qualitative research that schools were more likely than either further or higher education institutions to provide adults with the kind of informal and personal guidance they were looking for.

We were somewhat surprised, then, that eleven per cent of the sample reported that they had no contact with their school before starting classes. Why was this the case? We have no way of telling for certain. Some adults do not seek guidance because they want to be self-reliant or fear too much information. Many returners do not know where to turn for help in a new provider. We have already seen that 21 schools offered no induction programme to new adult students, sometimes for understandable reasons. Friendly, visible and accessible guidance services known to all their adult students, would ensure that any non-use is unambiguously the result of choice rather than necessity. Such services could be informal but they require time, training and staff availability if they are to meet adults' needs. We see this as an important issue in resource allocation.

■ Summary

Attracting adults

Schools used a wide variety of methods to attract adult students, including advertising, liaison with outside agencies, and the organisation of open days.

Schools perceived, however, that the most effective way in which to attract adults was through the grapevine and adults' informal contacts in the community. Indeed, the single largest group of adults found out about their school's provision through word of mouth from friends and relatives, rather than formal sources.

Making choices

Most adults reported that they chose their school because it offered the courses that they wanted. Almost half the sample, however, were unable to name a suitable alternative provider – implying that many adults' choices were limited by a narrow knowledge base. Schools' high profiles in the community seem to play a more important role in attracting adults than the facilities or provision they are able to offer.

Induction and initial guidance

Most schools offered new adult students some form of induction programme: this consisted most commonly of introductions to key people, the provision of literature and tours of the school. One third of schools offered no such programme. Adults usually had some sort of personal contact with their providers before they started their courses, citing informal methods such as those described by schools. A minority had no such contact during the initial stages of their return, although it was unclear from the data whether this was because they had made a conscious decision to 'go it alone' or because they did not know what services (if any) were on offer. There are issues of resources and staff time, training and availability to be resolved if schools wish to develop induction programmes for adults. Many schools now adopt imaginative induction schemes for their first year pupils transferring from primary schools. Can this experience be drawn upon in thinking about the induction of adult students?

3 Schools' views of adult participants

One key aim of our survey was to examine how the presence of adults in school affected the ways in which lessons were taught and provision was organised. We wished to see how far staff in school believed adults and younger pupils shared similar learner characteristics. We also investigated the effects any such perceived differences might have had on course provision and teaching methods in the classroom. Finally, we sought to discover whether respondents believed adult students' presence was an advantage or a disadvantage for schools and the sorts of benefits and deficits they represented. We turn now to a discussion of the data we collected from school staff and remind readers that we spoke to one individual with responsibility for adult provision in each school. Their views may or may not have been shared by the majority of staff and we undertook no direct observation of teaching. Nevertheless, it is interesting that distinctive patterns of views emerged from respondents. Adults were generally seen as having beneficial effects on schools and as being a pleasure to teach.

■ Teaching and learning

We asked our respondents to describe their views of the characteristics of adults as learners. What sorts of teaching methods and course provision did they feel were appropriate as a result of these characteristics? Our hypothesis was that teachers would see adults differently from younger students: this was borne out by the data. However, respondents did not believe that these differences necessitated a change in teaching styles or the curriculum. As a result, most believed that training school teachers to teach adults was unnecessary. These findings contradict those of earlier research which suggested that teachers did believe that more innovative teaching styles were required when working with adults (Beder and Darkenwald, 1982; Conti, 1985; Gorham, 1985).

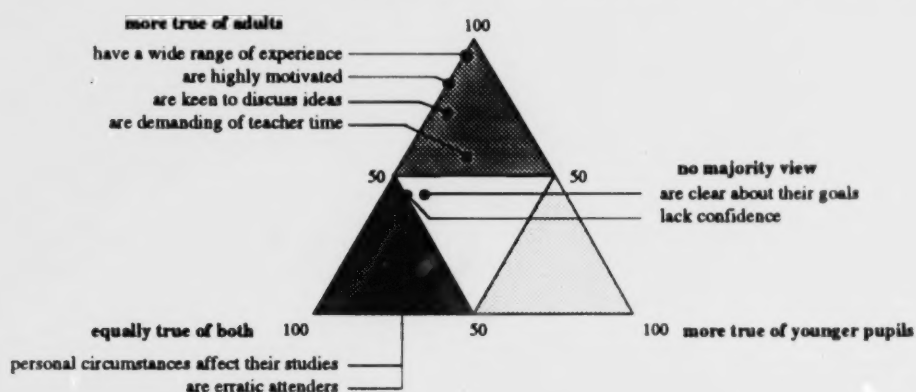
We were also interested to know whether adults were more likely to attend classes with younger pupils (called 'infill' provision) or whether schools were tending to make separate provision for their adult students (called 'adults-only' provision). In fact, most of the schools in the sample had adopted both strategies, though there was a tendency for infill classes to be for certificate courses and adults-only provision to be for uncertificated courses. None of the schools in the sample provided adults-only classes exclusively. Adults were more common further up the school (in S5 classes, particularly), either because adults and younger pupils were seen as incompatible for reasons of age and maturity, or simply because class sizes in the lower school were too large.

We now turn to examine each of these findings in more detail. We begin by considering schools' views of adults as learners, and go on to examine the implications of these views for teaching methods, teacher training and course provision.

Characteristics of adult learners

We asked respondents to comment on a list of statements which might apply to learners of any age. The list was drawn both from the literature and previous interviews, and included items such as, 'They are highly motivated' and 'They are erratic attenders'. This question had a dual purpose. The first was to see how far respondents believed each statement to be true of adults. The second was to determine how far respondents felt adult learners shared these characteristics with their younger counterparts. To accomplish this, interviewers read out eight statements and for each, respondents stated whether they thought it was more true of adults, more true of younger students, equally true of both groups or true of neither. Interviewers were alerted to the possibility that respondents might refuse to stereotype adults and younger students in this way. In fact, only one respondent objected to this line of questioning. The results are shown in Figure 3.1 below.

Figure 3.1 Respondents' views about the characteristics of adults and younger learners



As can be seen from the figure, most respondents identified four learner characteristics as being common to adults – indeed, more common to adults than younger pupils: they have a wide range of experiences to bring to bear on their work in the classroom (94% of respondents agreed with this statement); they are highly motivated (88%); they are keen to discuss their ideas and points of view (71%); and they are demanding of teachers' time (58%). The first three statements clearly indicate that teachers tend to see adult learners in a positive light; only the fourth one suggests a more problematic side to adults' learning characteristics. We now turn to a consideration of the implications of each statement.

Almost all of our respondents agreed that adults have a wider range of experience than younger pupils. The prevalence of this view no doubt relates to the fact that adult students are older than school-age students and are therefore likely to have more experience of the world, adult relationships, and previous education. It may be that for this reason teachers perceive more differences *between* adults than they do younger students who are, in any one class, close in age to one another and may have been together since starting secondary school. When talking about the benefits of having adults in school, adults' experience was seen positively by teachers, who identified it as one of the principal

contributions which adults made to the work of the class. We will discuss this issue further in the section on *benefits and disadvantages*.

Another characteristic which was more commonly recognised in adult students was high motivation. A key influence on this view must be adults' voluntary return to school: in many cases they are likely to have specific goals, whether these are personal or more job-related. Although this may explain why respondents tended to see adults as highly motivated, it does not explain why younger students are perceived as being less so. Are school pupils less likely to have educational goals than adults? Does this imply that teachers see adult students as individuals but view their younger students as a homogeneous group?

Most respondents agreed that adults are keen to discuss their points of view, although some saw this as a characteristic equally true of both adults and younger students. This observation may well be related to the two statements already discussed: if adults are highly motivated and have a wide variety of experiences to bring to bear on their work in the classroom, it is not surprising that they are also keen to discuss their varied perspectives. Encouragingly, this would seem to support the view that adults have valuable contributions to make to the work of the class. It may also imply, however, that adults can come to dominate class discussion and perhaps take up more of teachers' time than might reasonably be expected. Forty-two respondents, when asked about the disadvantages of having adults in schools, indicated that this is one of the principal drawbacks (see *disadvantages for pupils and staff*, below).

Views about other learner characteristics were more mixed. There was no majority view as to which group of students was clearer about its educational goals. This is perhaps surprising, in that one might imagine goals relate closely to motivation and that adults will therefore have more clearly defined goals than younger pupils. In fact, 11 respondents felt that neither adults nor school pupils were certain of their educational goals.

Other negative statements also produced mixed views. There was no majority view as to which group had greater confidence: 32 respondents agreed that adult students were more likely to lack confidence than younger students, while 26 thought that this was equally true of both groups. Most respondents felt that adults and pupils were equally susceptible to personal circumstances affecting their studies – and neither group was more likely to attend erratically than the other. It is interesting to note that the erratic attendance of adult students, which had been identified by at least one previous study (HMI, 1992b) as a major problem, does not appear to have been so for those in our sample. Of course, there is no evidence of the *degree* to which teachers felt either group was affected by these difficulties. These responses suggest, however, that school staff are aware of the kinds of barriers which their students – both adults and younger students – can face in the course of their studies.

Changes in teaching style

We presented respondents with a list of teaching methods and asked them to comment on whether they felt the presence of adults had necessitated their greater use. Out of the 72 schools 30 reported that teaching had changed as a result of adults' participation in lessons, as shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Changes in teaching style

	schools (n = 30)	
	number	%
teaching is more 'informal'	27	90
there is more group discussion	21	70
there is greater emphasis on students taking responsibility for their own learning	20	67
more resources for students' use are now necessary	19	63
teaching is more 'personal', including contact with students outside lessons	19	63
there is more individualised work	18	60
negotiation of deadlines is more flexible	17	57
methods such as lectures and note-taking are used more	2	7

The most common reported change in teaching was that it had become more 'informal'. One explanation for this may be that teachers' relationships with their students change when adults are present and this may manifest itself in more informal teaching styles. We do not have any data on this issue, apart from the fact that 19 of the schools which had noted changes in teaching styles also agreed that teaching styles had become more 'personal', involving contact with students outside the classroom.

Other changes, however, may be related to the differences between adults and younger students which had been described to us. For example, respondents noted that teachers make wider use of group discussion now than they had previously. Perhaps this is a result of adults' wider range of experiences and their eagerness to express their ideas and points of view. Respondents also observed that there was more emphasis on students taking responsibility for their own learning and the developing of resources which students can use on their own. Both of these innovations may relate to the view that adults are more highly motivated and can thus be given greater responsibility for their own learning. These strategies might also help to counter the demands which adults make on teachers' time and minimise the effects of erratic attendance and adverse personal circumstances. This last factor may also have influenced a move to greater flexibility in negotiating deadlines for homework and assignments, recorded by over half of the schools which noted changes in teaching styles. In addition, a number of schools have developed more individualised programmes of work for students. This could be a strategy for helping to capitalise on adults' varied experiences. It might also be a response to the greater demands adults make of teachers and to problems of erratic attendance or lack of confidence. Both of these could be alleviated by 'drop-in' type provision, tailored to the needs of the individual. All of these features are in line with the notion of 'andragogy' (Knowles, 1980). Knowles argued that 'good practice' in the teaching of adults meant treating them differently from younger learners, through the use of more flexible, collaborative teaching methods.

Few other changes were mentioned. Some respondents felt that teaching standards had improved as a result of having adults in school and mentioned specifically that lesson preparation was now more thorough (3 cases) and that classroom management was better (3 cases). If this is so, then surely all students benefit from adults' presence in lessons. We offer the suggestion that schools might benefit from reflecting on the differences in teaching methods which some of the noted characteristics of adult learners suggest and consider whether their adoption would benefit all students.

Perhaps the most interesting finding from this data is that the majority of the sample (41 respondents) did *not* think that teaching styles in their schools had changed as a result of having adult students in the classroom – even though most respondents accepted that there were differences between adults and younger students. This finding contradicts work by previous researchers (Beder and Darkenwald, 1982; Gorham, 1985) which found that teachers who perceived differences between adults and younger students also claimed to teach the two groups in different ways. We wondered why our respondents did not share this view. One possibility is that our respondents, however enthusiastic about teaching adults, still see the teaching of younger students as their primary responsibility. They might therefore be unwilling to introduce methods which they see as appropriate for adults but which might not benefit other pupils. Yet one or two respondents noted that the presence of adults had caused teachers to review the efficacy of their methods, and that this had benefited *all* students (see *benefits to younger students and staff*, below). Another possibility is that teachers already use the methods we listed and therefore noted no *change* in their teaching styles. We do not have enough information to understand fully the reasons for this unexpected finding, but wonder whether some schools may need to become more responsive to the needs of the various groups of learners they serve, rather than hope 'one approach fits all'.

Training in teaching adults

In very few schools (seven) were subject teachers believed to have had specialist training in teaching adults, although 26 respondents felt that special skills were required. Respondents in most schools (41) neither had staff trained in teaching adults nor thought that such training was necessary.

The particular skills identified by those respondents who did feel that training was necessary varied widely, but fell into two categories. Firstly, it was felt that teachers needed to know more about adults' readiness to learn and about the characteristics which differentiated them from younger students. They needed to know, for example, how to assess adults' experience accurately, to take into account their circumstances and their educational needs. Teachers needed to be aware that adults might have different learning patterns from younger students. Secondly, teachers needed training in teaching methods which were perceived as more appropriate for adult students, such as working in a more informal way; developing ways of negotiating the curriculum and learning styles; and moving away from 'chalk and talk'. It was felt that greater emphasis should be placed on methods which encourage discussion and interaction between students. The implications of adults' and pupils' varying characteristics led one respondent to query the best way of balancing the needs of adults and younger students when they are learning in the same classroom.

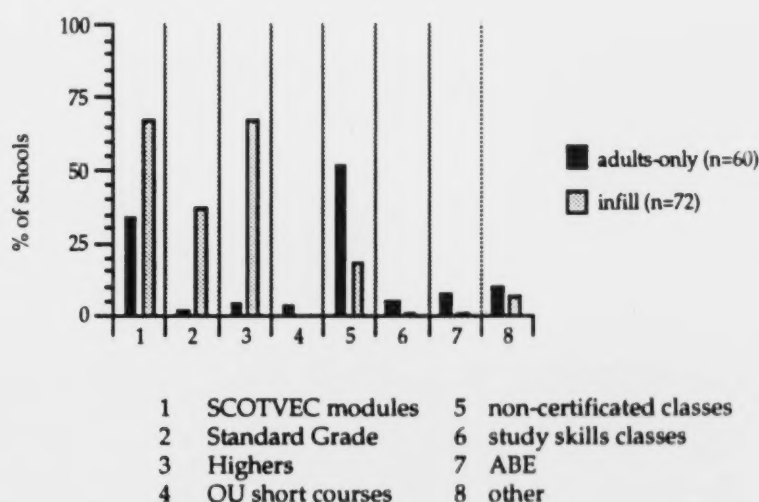
Course provision

We asked respondents to tell us about the kinds of provision they made for adults in their schools and what they thought were the most appropriate types of provision. In particular we were interested in knowing whether adults joined mainstream school classes with younger students (provision which schools often term 'infilling') or whether schools made separate provision for their adult students. Where adults did join classes with pupils, we asked which year groups were regarded as the most suitable for adults to join.

Of our sample, 60 schools offered a mixture of the two types of provision: some infill classes and some classes for adults only. In 12 schools, all adult provision was infill. None of the schools in the sample offered adults-only classes exclusively.

It appeared from the information our respondents provided that there is a tendency for infill classes to be certificated whilst adults-only classes are often non-certificated classes.

Figure 3.2 Types of courses and mode of provision



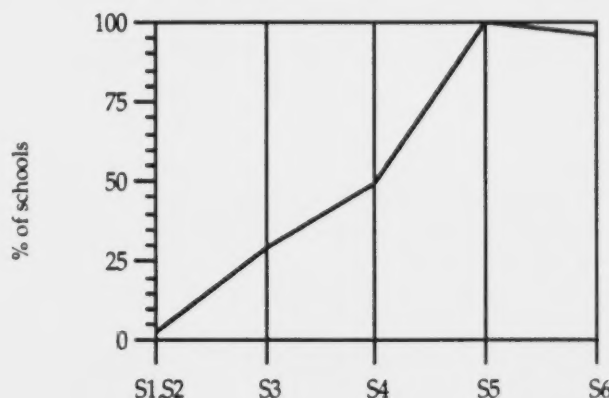
'Other' provision for adults only included ESL classes, special needs work, SEB short courses, distance learning courses, OU tutorials, City and Guilds courses and custom-made courses. 'Other' provision for infill referred to CSYS, S1 and S2 classes.

The most popular courses offered to adults in infill classes were SCOTVEC modules and Highers. It was much rarer for adults to take Standard Grade courses. There are at least two possible reasons for this. The first is that timetables for Standard Grade classes often necessitate adults coming into school on three or four different occasions in one week over a period of two years. The second reason is that, in many cases, students have to build up portfolios of work which require a good deal of time spent outside lessons. Evidence from our previous study suggests that adults find that devoting such a protracted length of time for one qualification is undesirable. SCOTVEC modules often allow adults to attain equivalent qualifications in a shorter period of time. Modules also avoid the need for formal examinations at the end of the course, a method of assessment which

many of the adults (39%) who completed our student questionnaire found unhelpful.

Schools with infill provision must decide which year groups adults should join. Every school had adults in S5, but the number of adult 'infillers' decreased further down the school.

Figure 3.3 School year groups with adult 'infillers'



Few respondents (14) thought that it was appropriate for adults to join classes in the lower school (S1, S2, S3), and it was felt particularly inappropriate in S1 and S2. Three principal reasons were given for this view: the gap in age and maturity between older and younger learners was too great; the content and level of work was inappropriate for older learners; and classes in S1 and S2 were already too big.

Those who did think that it was acceptable for adults to join lower school classes (eight respondents) argued that they were suitable where a subject was new to adults (a foreign language, for example). A minority (four respondents) felt that adults who were hoping to gain qualifications might find it appropriate to start the course in S3, in order to ensure a solid foundation for their studies.

Adults-only provision consisted mainly of uncertificated classes (in 52 schools), often described by our respondents as 'leisure' or 'interest' classes. It is important to be aware, however, that some adults take certificated courses for reasons of 'leisure' and 'interest', while others take uncertificated 'tasters' when they first return to school in preparation for certificated courses which they hope will provide them with qualifications for future study or careers.

A substantial number of schools (34) also offered SCOTVEC modules for adults only. As the modules were originally designed with post-school learners in mind, this is not surprising. Comments by some respondents indicated that certain subjects were so popular with adults (notably word processing and business studies) that extra adults-only classes had to be laid on.

Did respondents feel that either infill or adults-only provision was more appropriate for adult learners? There was no clear consensus on this issue. Whilst circumstances such as student numbers, available resources and timetable

demands were all seen as important in influencing provision, the same or similar circumstances in different schools were equally likely to lead to both adults-only and infill classes.

Changes to the curriculum

In the light of the range of different courses offered in schools, we were surprised to find that few respondents (26) reported changes to the curriculum. In most cases (ten), the principal change was that modular courses were now made available to younger students. A wider range of subjects than had previously been on offer was also noted by seven respondents.

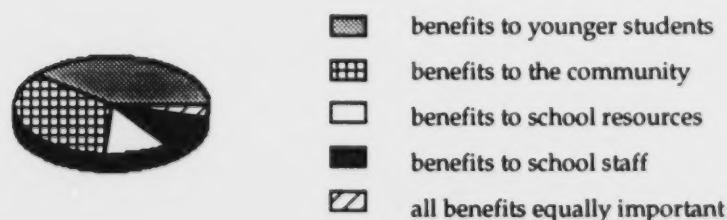
■ Benefits and disadvantages

Most respondents had a very positive attitude towards the presence of adult students. Comments such as 'Adults are enthusiastic and co-operative students' and 'Teachers enjoy teaching adults' made this clear. We asked our interviewees to tell us about the sorts of benefits adults brought to the school and what the disadvantages were with such provision. Although this was an open question, the degree of similarity in views expressed across all schools was striking. All respondents agreed that the presence of adults brought a range of benefits both to the school and to the wider community. Respondents also identified disadvantages, though many saw these as minor problems rather than serious drawbacks. All but two of the individuals with whom we spoke agreed that the benefits of having adults in school outweighed the disadvantages.

The benefits of having adults in schools

We asked our interviewees to describe all the benefits which they felt adults brought to their schools. Four recipients of benefits were identified: school pupils; the community; school staff; and school resources. Figure 3.4 below shows the percentage of schools which felt each benefit was the most important for them.

Figure 3.4 Main benefits of adults in schools



All benefits were not equal. Respondents felt that benefits for younger pupils and the community heavily outweighed those to staff and resources. This finding is consistent with our earlier point that falling rolls were not the only factor in schools' original recruitment of adult students. Other factors, such as education policy or the needs in the local community, also played a role. In this part of the survey, too, respondents indicated that altruism rather than pragmatism was the key to their vision of adults in schools.

We turn now to a brief discussion of the benefits which the schools described.

Benefits to younger students and staff

Benefits to younger students and staff were frequently related to one another in the minds of our respondents. If the influence of adults in the school led to greater motivation among younger students, this was seen not only as an advantage for the students but also for teachers, who found teaching highly motivated students more stimulating and more rewarding. Conversely, if teachers found that the presence of adults in the classroom led them to reflect more deeply on their teaching methods and improve their classroom delivery, this was seen as a benefit not only for staff themselves but for all the students they taught.

One of the most frequently reported advantages, for students and staff alike, was that adults' presence improved the ethos of schools. Younger students benefited when adults encouraged a more positive attitude to education and acted as positive role models: the effects of this included improvements in the behaviour and motivation of younger students, as well as an increase in their confidence. Some respondents described the effects of adults' presence in the school as 'maturing', 'civilising' and 'stabilising'. The following extracts from interviews give a flavour of their comments:

The motivation of adults is high and encourages other students.

By having adults in the class, it helps the children realise that it is never too late to learn.

Adult returners are determined to do well this time around – they're a good model of determination, and of the benefits of sticking to the course.

The presence of adults in the school was powerful evidence that education is for life.

We believe that education is for all and for life. Adult returners demonstrate this to younger pupils who might otherwise reject education.

They show pupils that learning doesn't stop when you leave school, and that there are always possibilities afterwards if things don't work out as planned.

There are numerous benefits. One of the most important is that students begin to understand that learning continues into the future and that learning is a life-long process.

It was also felt that having adults at school breaks down age barriers and helped younger students become more used to adult company.

Respondents reported that, in lessons, adults had valuable experiences to contribute to the work of the class, and thus enriched the educational experience of all students. Because teachers generally enjoyed teaching adults and found the situation a new challenge, adults' presence was thought to increase teachers' motivation and raise the standards of their teaching to the benefit of all. Teachers were also reported to find greater satisfaction in their work:

Having adults keeps teachers on their toes – they prepare their lessons better when there are adults in the class and they also appreciate the help adults can give to younger pupils.

The presence of adults allows teachers to reflect on ways of communicating with older students and thus also on the way they communicate with pupils.

Resource benefits

SOED hold that resources are allocated on the full time equivalent (FTE) of adult enrolment. In 1991 in Strathclyde, Scotland's largest region, this was worth some £42.90 for each FTE student and a total of 19 additional FTE staff region-wide. The allocation of resources to teachers and departments varies from school to school. Many of our respondents could describe only in the most general terms adult students' effects on resources: most were aware that in taking adult students their schools had acquired additional staff, money, equipment or facilities. In some dramatic cases, the increase in roll may have enabled schools threatened with closure to remain in existence. In other instances, adult students had allowed schools to continue offering courses which might otherwise have had to be abandoned and indeed offer new courses. They had also helped to maintain or increase staff numbers:

It helps to keep the school curriculum healthy – we have broader curriculum choice and a lot of modules, which suit upper school pupils as well as adults.

It is an excellent way of improving and selling the image of the school and gaining additional staffing and resources.

Benefits to the community

A strong theme in our interviews was the benefits schools could offer to the wider community. Respondents felt that welcoming adults into schools helped to break down barriers between schools and local communities; improved communities' understanding of what schools were like; and allowed schools to provide an important community service:

What is important is the message adults take into the community of the quality of work going on in the school.

They are good ambassadors for the school in the community.

Adults promote a sense of community in the school.

One school also noted the beneficial effects on the local economy:

The school is a source of employment for the community: we employ 90 local people in relation to our adult provision.

The benefits referred to tend to be to the school rather than the community as such, with the possible exception of employment opportunities. As we shall see, however, adults report a wide variety of gains from returning to school. These gains in many ways echo the aspirations of educationalists who support the development of a 'learning society' (Ranson, 1992). They envisage raising students' awareness of their responsibility to the community and also greater community involvement in the development of a curriculum reflective of and responsive to local needs and interests. Schools' potential to fulfil these goals – to which the government has also voiced commitment in the past (cf. Scottish Office, 1988) – merits attention from policy-makers involved in decisions about funding adult provision in schools. Indeed, the role schools might play as part of a community development network needs investigating.

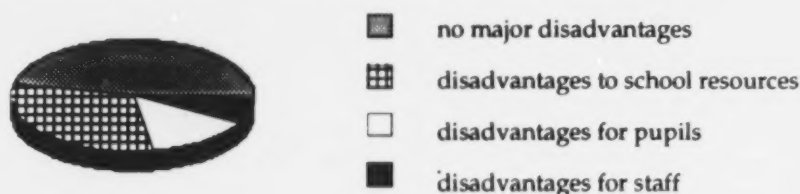
Disadvantages of adults in schools

Respondents believed that having adults in schools brought fewer disadvantages than benefits. Fifteen said that there were no disadvantages at all. Several (17) were also reluctant to describe the drawbacks they identified as 'disadvantages',

prefacing them with remarks such as 'This is not really a disadvantage – more a problem for us at the moment.' Thus, when asked to identify one primary disadvantage, almost half the sample declined to do so.

The disadvantages which were identified seemed to fall into three categories: disadvantages for pupils; disadvantages for staff; and disadvantages in terms of school resources. This last was the main disadvantage for most respondents prepared to accept the label. It was notable that poor attendance and high drop out rates, which a previous study had identified as a cause for concern in schools with adult students (HMI, 1992b), were raised only rarely by the respondents in our sample. The following figure shows the percentage of respondents who perceived each disadvantage as affecting their schools most.

Figure 3.5 Main disadvantages of adults in schools



We now turn briefly to discuss each of these types of disadvantages more fully.

Disadvantages in terms of school resources

Although, as we have seen, adults can have a beneficial effect on schools' resources (particularly in terms of maintaining levels of staffing and provision), some respondents noted that other aspects of resourcing can suffer. Adults can take up excessive amounts of teacher time, make heavy administrative demands, and require social space of their own, separate from that provided for younger students.

Two related issues which we hypothesised would give rise to considerable concern among providers were the problems caused by erratic attendance and high drop out rates among adult students. In fact, this was reported by few respondents (five in the former case, three in the latter), who argued that adults who attend erratically can draw heavily on schools' resources without providing much of a return for the effort expended to overcome the problem. Of course, erratic attendance and high drop out rates are not only resource issues. Where these are identified as major disadvantages for schools they raise questions about the nature and efficacy of schools' provision – both the courses themselves and guidance and support services. This may be why schools were unwilling to mention difficulties of this kind. The following statements give a flavour of comments made about attendance:

Some teachers see adults as a nuisance. They drop out after a few weeks, wasting the time spent on them and going off with materials such as expensive art books.

Adults often have other commitments and can be poor attenders. They don't always have background knowledge of the subject or are out-of-date. They may lack self-confidence and need extra support from staff.

There can also be problems because of the way in which adult education is funded: two schools mentioned that only certificated classes are funded and that their uncertificated provision is, effectively, financed from the school's existing resources (we did not ask schools specifically about fees, but a number of respondents indicated that courses were free, see Chapter 4). Since it is true that many adults choose uncertificated courses as their first point of return to education in order to build up confidence before progressing to certificated courses, ensuring that such provision is free is an important long-term strategy.

Disadvantages for younger students and for staff

As we noted earlier, respondents tended to link the effects which adults had on younger students with the effects on staff. Thus, though adults' taking up of teachers' time was problematic for staff, younger students could also suffer as a result. For example, adults were often so keen to continue a discussion that they failed to leave the classroom when the lesson finished, thus delaying the next class. Adults could dominate class discussions, permitting younger students fewer opportunities to contribute. Younger students might therefore find adults' presence off-putting, and their own needs overlooked. In some cases, respondents believed pupils felt disadvantaged by teachers who preferred adults and treated them more favourably as a result:

There have been some complaints from older pupils that staff direct attention towards adults in mixed classes and speak differently to them, particularly in discussion sessions.

You have to be careful that you don't devote too much time to adults – most are reserved in their demands but some make unrealistic demands and want special attention.

Teachers sometimes feel they have to treat adults differently and be more flexible with them. They are less inclined to be firm with adults, and thus there may be perceived inequalities.

Though most staff enjoy teaching adults, some do not. Respondents noted that this was a situation which had to be handled with care. In some schools, for example, staff were permitted to refuse to teach adults. Other respondents noted that new and insecure staff need a good deal of support from more senior teachers, although this would presumably be the case even when there were no adults in the school.

Staff could also find adult students' behaviour difficult to handle, whether it was because they were dominating the classroom or because they were lacking in confidence. In addition, some adults could be critical of teachers' competence, and unafraid of voicing this:

We need very skilled teachers as adults can attempt to dictate the class.

They can put pressure on teachers – particularly younger staff – as some adults can be very opinionated and aggressive.

School and community: some problematic issues

One respondent, though a firm supporter of the concept of community schools, reflected at some length on some of the problems they pose for learners and the community. On the one hand, she felt that school teaching methods can be 'infantilising' for adults, in the sense that they assume the teacher is the source of all knowledge and authority, and imply that students (whether of school age or

adult) learn best by listening and obeying. She told us, 'Adults should be able to be active, questioning, challenging, reviewing the work of the class regularly, but they don't do this, and this can be educationally debilitating.'

On the other hand, she wondered what the effects of studying in a community school might be on younger students. Most other respondents focused on the positive effects adults had in terms of increased motivation among younger students, and the fostering of what one might term more 'adult' behaviour. We saw earlier that a number of respondents believed adults to have a 'maturing' and 'civilising' effect throughout the school. This teacher, however, wondered whether, psychologically, such adult behaviour was appropriate or desirable for younger students.

At the same time, however, she was aware of the dangers of concluding that adults and younger students should be kept separate. She argued that the principle of integration was important, though the implications should be studied in more depth:

Is a community school the most appropriate way forward for younger students? There is a lobby in the school to make it have more of a school identity and plans to separate younger students and adults. This could be dangerous as I feel that integration of the students is important.

These questions raise important issues about the purpose of community schools. Is it the case that the interests of the community conflict on occasion with the interests of particular groups? It may not always be the interests of younger students which are overlooked. Another respondent suggested that, although the school was in an area of social and economic disadvantage, most of the adults who made use of the school's provision were 'middle-class'. Perhaps such provision exacerbates divisions in the community, rather than transforms them.

Such a possibility has been raised in earlier studies, notably in the work of Hayes and Darkenwald (1988) who argued that adult basic education (in the USA) is a 'creaming operation' designed to attract students who already espouse, or are prepared to adopt, middle-class values. We suggested earlier that community schools may have an important role to play in promoting education providers' responsibility and sensitivity towards community needs and encouraging greater community involvement in the development of an appropriate and responsive curriculum. The concomitant danger, articulated by one respondent, is that schools' lack of genuine accessibility, communication, and awareness of community perspectives can lead to paternalistic attitudes among staff and fragmentation of the community.

■ Summary

Teaching and learning

Adults were viewed as having many positive characteristics as learners: they were perceived to have a wide range of experiences to bring to bear on their work in the classroom; to be highly motivated; and to be eager to discuss their ideas and points of view. Most respondents believed these characteristics to be more true of adults than younger learners. However, although teachers appeared to favour adults and see them as different from pupils, these factors did not seem to have brought about marked changes either in teaching styles or in the organisation of provision. Few teachers in school had received any training in the teaching of

older learners, and there was a general perception that such training was unnecessary.

The benefits of having adults in schools

The majority of the respondents in our sample found the presence of adults an asset for four recipient groups: school pupils; the community; school staff; and school resources. These benefits included improved motivation amongst all pupils; better school atmosphere; greater job satisfaction amongst teachers; raised standards of teaching; the maintenance or enhancement of staffing and provision levels; and the breaking down of barriers between schools and their local communities.

The disadvantages of having adults in schools

Most respondents believed the benefits arising from adults' presence in schools outweighed any possible disadvantages. Almost half the sample was unable to identify any disadvantages whatsoever. Those that were mentioned fell into three categories: disadvantages for pupils; disadvantages for staff; and disadvantages for resources. Adults were felt to take up too much of teachers' time and make heavy administrative demands. They could dominate class discussion and cause resentment amongst other pupils. Questions were raised about the role of school provision in the community and the degree to which educational opportunities could be seen to be socially divisive if participation was restricted to certain groups.

4 Guidance and support

Guidance and support are vital in ensuring the success of adults' return to education. Adults appreciate guidance at three stages of their participation. When they first return to school, they seek advice about the types of courses available and the levels at which they can study. Throughout the time that they are at school, they may require advice and support on a range of matters which directly or indirectly affect their ability to continue their studies. As their courses come to an end, they are likely to want advice about ways of continuing their studies, progressing to other forms of education and finding employment.

In our survey, we were particularly interested in the formal support schools were able to offer adults: how guidance services were organised and administered and the stages at which they sought to advise students. We examined the role of initial, or pre-induction guidance in Chapter 2. Here we consider the formal guidance services schools made available to adult students during their courses and when they were considering their futures. We also look at additional ways in which schools could support adults: by offering useful facilities such as crèches and common rooms; through the monitoring of course provision; and through links with other educational providers, agencies and employers. We now turn to a brief consideration of each of these aspects of support before examining the school data in relation to them.

■ Types of guidance

The importance of well-informed and accessible guidance for adults has become a key issue in adult education in recent years (Alexander and Steward, 1987; Docherty, 1988; Nelson, 1989; Ravis, 1992; HMI 1992a and 1992b; Lowden and Powney, 1993). Indeed, SOED has launched Adult Education Guidance Initiative Scotland (AEGIS), with the aim of signalling the national importance attached to high quality guidance provision. Our own earlier research (Blair et al, 1993) suggested that schools were more likely to provide appropriate guidance for adults than either further or higher education institutions. We speculated that one reason for this might be that schools, alert to the differences between adults and younger students and the potential problems in integrating the two groups, were more conscious of the need to provide advice and support which was clearly targeted at adults. In this survey, therefore, we were interested to discover the degree of awareness in schools of the importance of guidance for adults.

Our qualitative study revealed that a vital determinant of adults' staying on course was the support offered to them by their provider. A key factor in this support was the presence of helpful and accessible guidance staff who were well-informed about the provision available in their own school and in other institutions. Students also emphasised the importance of facilities which helped them to study and feel at ease at school: such facilities included crèche provision, libraries, and

study and social space separate from younger students. One of the aims of our survey was, therefore, to discover the extent to which schools had appointed staff with a specific brief for adult guidance and provided appropriate facilities for adult students.

HMI (1992b) have stressed the importance of the systematic monitoring of students' attendance and progress and seeking out the views of staff and students as to what makes a course successful. Such monitoring helps providers to uncover the reasons for non-completion of courses (which was identified as a major problem for some schools) and, sometimes, encourages 'high risk' students to complete. Staff and student evaluations also enable schools to improve the courses on offer to adults and become more responsive to students' needs. We therefore wanted to investigate whether schools carried out systematic monitoring, and what use they made of the data they collected.

Both our own earlier study and the HMI report (1992b) drew attention to the lack of constructive links between the various providers of adult education and noted that adults who have returned to education often experience considerable difficulty in finding the information they need in order to progress to the next stage of education (see also Munn et al, 1993). For this reason we asked respondents to describe the nature of the links they had with other providers of adult education and the ways in which these links helped adults to progress, whether 'onwards and upwards' or 'sideways' through the system. At the same time, we asked our respondents to tell us about the links they had with employers and how these might help the adults in their schools to find jobs. As 24% of the adults who returned our questionnaire said that gaining qualifications or skills to improve their chances of finding a job was the main reason they had returned to school, this was clearly a pertinent question to ask of schools.

We turn now to discuss each of these types of guidance – ongoing guidance and guidance for progression as facilitated by monitoring and links with other providers – in turn. We begin with a consideration of guidance staff in schools.

■ On-going guidance

Guidance staff

Guidance staff who have specialist training or experience in adult guidance are a valuable addition to schools' provision for adult learners, particularly where they are perceived by adults themselves to be friendly, visible, and knowledgeable. Our qualitative work demonstrated that such guidance staff are vital in the process of integrating adults into schools and creating a culture where adults feel accepted and confident. Adults particularly praised the ability of guidance staff to explain confusing and unintelligible 'jargon' and therefore help clarify options. Guidance staff can also be important in introducing adults to other staff and other adult students and making them feel at ease in surroundings which many find intimidating.

Most of our interviewees in schools (68) felt that adults' guidance needs were different from those of younger students, and the majority of schools (59) had a member of staff with responsibility in this area, either full or part-time. This responsibility usually lay with senior members of staff who were assigned the task along with a number of others. In half the schools (36), the organiser of adult provision was directly responsible for adult guidance, too. Surprisingly perhaps,

hardly any schools (three) had allocated responsibility for adult guidance to existing guidance staff.

Some schools (18), however, had created a specific appointment relating to adult guidance and a few (12) had trained adult guidance staff. Those who had been trained varied widely in their experience, from one guidance worker with a Masters degree in counselling to another who had had 'in-house' training. Two of those who described themselves as having had training in adult guidance cited long experience in the field rather than formal courses or qualifications. One commented:

Twelve years of dealing with adults in evening classes and my previous job as teacher of guidance in a school should count for something.

Respondents in 13 schools indicated that there was no one with responsibility for adult guidance in the school. All of these happened to be in Strathclyde Region, and to be schools with relatively low numbers of adults (between 20 and 120). This latter characteristic explains, in part, why adult guidance was not felt to be a high priority. Interestingly, five of the schools were in areas of social and economic disadvantage. Since schools in such areas have a vital role to play in encouraging non-participant adults to return to education, we expected that they all would have made adult guidance a priority and to have this priority reflected in staffing provision.

We asked our informants whether adults also looked to other members of staff for support and advice. The majority of respondents (67) believed individual subject teachers were adults' key sources of guidance although adults were reported in some cases to consult careers staff and school guidance staff. This confirms the finding from our qualitative study that subject staff were adults' most important point of contact with their provider. We shall see, too, in Chapter 6 that the adults in this study also shared this view. This raises an important issue for the teachers of adults. We know that their students see them in a pastoral role. Do they view themselves in this way? We have already speculated that, although teachers enjoy having adults in lessons, they still see teaching children as their main concern. How likely are teachers to have the time or inclination to take on pastoral duties for adults, as well? This was not seen as a disadvantage of providing for adults from the schools' point of view, but we wonder if adults will receive their full 'entitlement' to guidance if schools are relying on subject teachers to provide it.

Teachers may not have the time to provide guidance for adult students. It seems they are not trained in this area: only 11 respondents mentioned that staff had received training in adult guidance. In seven of these cases, the guidance workers were not classroom teachers but either community education staff or members of regional guidance or careers services. Interestingly, 56 respondents felt that their staff should have some training in adult guidance. Awareness of the differences between adults' guidance needs and those of younger students was the most commonly cited area in which training was needed. This involved a recognition of the difficulties adults face in returning to adult education; awareness of adults' personal circumstances and their responsibilities, both of which may at times interfere with their studies; and knowledge of appropriate ways of supporting adult students in the light of their particular guidance needs. Strathclyde Region have commissioned a new diploma in adult guidance from

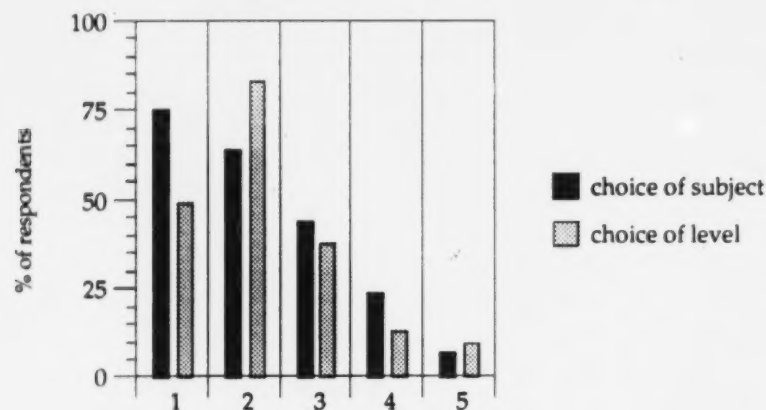
an education college. Our evidence suggests that such training will be welcomed in all regions which provide for adults in school. It will be interesting to see how this qualification develops and the use school staff will be able to make of it.

The guidance offered to adults

We asked staff about two different aspects of ongoing guidance: the ways in which they helped to place students on courses; and the kinds of advice and support students sought whilst studying. Each is discussed more fully, below.

Respondents told us how students chose their subjects and how the level at which they studied the subject (i.e. modules, Highers, or uncertificated courses) was determined. The principal – and not unexpected – finding is that while students tended to select the subjects they studied themselves, the level at which they studied was usually determined by subject teachers or, to a lesser extent, by guidance staff. However, just under half the schools in the sample allowed students to select independently the level at which they studied as well.

Figure 4.1 Guidance for choice of subject and level studied



- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 students select independently | 4 students are advised by community education workers |
| 2 students are advised by tutors | 5 students are tested |
| 3 students are advised by guidance staff | |

Individual respondents also mentioned a variety of other methods of selection. These included informal assessment, taster and brush-up classes, and advice from careers officers.

When asked about the kinds of advice students most frequently sought in the course of their studies, most of our respondents reported that information about further study opportunities and careers advice were in high demand. This suggests that the time at which adults began to think about progression – whether to other forms of education or into work – was the point at which adults were most likely to look for information and advice. In the section *inter-agency links*, below, we will examine the extent to which schools were able to provide support for adults who were hoping to progress in these directions.

Table 4.1 Types of guidance sought

	schools (n = 72)	
	number	%
advice on further study	67	93
advice on careers	59	82
support and advice on study skills	48	67
support and advice on personal matters which may affect students' ability to study	36	50
financial advice	19	26

School staff saw careers guidance as a problematic area for two reasons. Firstly, keeping information up to date was seen to require time and resources which were not always available. Secondly, requirements for adults seeking to enter a particular profession might be different from the requirements for school leavers, necessitating (again) some sort of specialist advice. HMI, however, have pointed out that 'under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 education authorities have a duty to provide persons attending, either full or part time, education establishments other than universities with advice on employment or training; no reference is made to the age of such persons' (1992b, p 17). Yet only ten schools reported that they liaised with adult guidance specialists from the careers service. Again we wonder if adult students who wish it are receiving the guidance to which they are entitled. We shall return to this issue in Chapter 7, when we discuss the progression plans of the adult participants in the sample.

A substantial number of our respondents also reported requests for support and advice on study skills, while half noted the need for support and advice on personal matters affecting students' ability to study. Financial advice was less in demand. This surprised us, as our previous study suggested that the financial difficulties of returning to education had been of considerable concern to students. They were worried about the potential loss of earnings or effects on benefits of returning to study and the payment of fees. HMI (1992b) reported that up to 40% of enquiries to careers officers from adults in schools were related to benefits or welfare problems.

How do we explain the seeming absence of such concerns in the schools in our sample? Three possible explanations present themselves. First, we know that most of the adults who return to school are either women with domestic responsibilities or retired people, two groups likely to be least affected by such difficulties when participating part-time. Second, most of the schools in the sample did not charge fees. Third, if students do require such advice, perhaps they go elsewhere. Perhaps teachers – suitable sources of guidance in other contexts – are not seen as appropriate individuals in whom to confide one's financial concerns. In view of the considerable financial difficulties students in further and higher education experience, however, it would be interesting to know the extent to which schools are able to provide financial advice for adults planning to progress to these types of institution. Unfortunately we do not have data on this point.

Facilities for adult students

The facilities schools are able to offer their adult students can influence the ways in which they view their experiences of returning to education, and consequently on their continued participation. Most carers of pre-school children, for example, are dependent on providers' childcare facilities. Adults also appreciate common rooms where they can sit quietly to gather their thoughts or share experiences (and coffee) with others. The 'community of older learners' fostered in these circumstances can be an important source of support. Yet such facilities can be expensive to run and occupy vital space: thus, in schools where adult provision is not a priority, specialist facilities are unlikely to be on offer.

We asked the schools' representatives what sorts of facilities they provided specifically for their adult students, and found that most schools did make provision of some kind.

Table 4.2 Facilities for adult students

	schools (n = 61)	
	number	%
crèche	48	79
adult students' lounge	37	61
study room	26	43
library	18	30
adult canteen	5	8

The commonest facility which schools provide specifically for the use of adult students is a crèche. We saw in Chapter 2 that schools regarded crèche provision as one of the main ways of attracting parents of pre-school children – the principal target group of half the schools in the sample.

Often, this provision was made possible through special funding. Some had originally developed through Urban Aid or monies from other sources such as the Van Leer Foundation. Many were funded from the Community Education budget. Clearly, other providers do not have access to the same financial sources that schools do. Yet the lack of crèche provision in other types of providers of adult education (notably further and higher education) is one of the principal barriers to the return of the carers of pre-school children. Further and higher education institutions interested in widening access might benefit from exploring in more detail the reasons behind schools' success in this area. (Childcare facilities in further and higher education institutions are inspected by regional social work departments under the auspices of the Children's Act (1989), applied in Scotland in 1991. School crèches, falling under local authority control, are governed by and inspected under the regulations of local authority education departments.)

More than half of the schools in the sample also had a separate lounge or some other form of social space for their adult students. Our respondents felt this to be important so that adults could retreat from younger pupils outside lessons. Such areas also created a contact and communication point for the students and staff working with them.

Private study facilities were slightly less common: 44 schools provided either an adult students' study room, or a library for adult students, or both. Such facilities can be of particular importance to adults who may have no quiet space in which to study at home. Some of the more unusual facilities for adults provided by individual schools included an adult careers library and an adult resource bank. Few schools (14 in all) were planning to provide facilities for their adult students in the future, and of these half hoped to provide an adult students' lounge. Most of these schools already had crèche provision.

An additional 'facility' which many schools provided was free or inexpensive course provision. We did not ask a specific question about fees in the survey, but 34 respondents volunteered the information that they did not charge adults at all, and a further six told us that their fees were minimal. Regional policy on fees for adult students differ (although SOED use the FTE at S5 and S6 – including adults – as part of a formula for calculating staffing requirements). The regional council in Strathclyde, for example, took the decision in 1988 that school education would be free to all learners of whatever age: there, the FTE of adult enrolment is treated for staffing and per capita allocations in the same way as continuing enrolments into S5 and S6. As a result, schools in that region do not charge their adult students fees. In another region, adults are slotted into available places in existing examination classes: fees are therefore avoided, but course choice is limited. In a third region, adults are charged the 'basic FE hourly rate' for school classes, unless they possess certificates of exemption.

Finance can be a major barrier for returning adults. A further reason why schools have been able to attract sections of the population which have traditionally shown little enthusiasm for return could be that it costs little or nothing to join classes. Not only does this allow those who cannot afford other forms of education the opportunity to study, but it is also an incentive for those who are unsure about returning and who would be unwilling to commit themselves financially at the outset.

Given that schools had described the difficulty of finding the resources for adult provision we were impressed by the facilities which many schools had succeeded in making available to adults. In our view, one of the principal factors in schools' success in attracting traditional non-participants has been the provision of facilities which enable adults both to surmount some of the barriers they face in returning to education and develop a sense of 'belonging' in an environment in which adults are not generally the majority student group.

■ Guidance for progression

Monitoring students' progress

Monitoring adults' progress once they have started on their courses is important for a number of reasons:

- monitoring of attendance patterns can help staff to identify erratic attenders and potential non-completers early on and discover whether there are underlying problems which can be resolved by the school;
- feedback from students and staff can help to identify successful courses, providing useful information for planning future provision;
- feedback can help to identify problems and suggest solutions;

- records of students' achievements and their positive comments on the school's provision can be used to justify future funding and encourage other students to enrol.

To what extent, then, did schools in our sample monitor adults' progress once they had started their courses? The majority (60 out of 72) reported that some form of monitoring took place. Most respondents described an informal arrangement with subject teachers or students. Some schools collected standard statistics such as attendance records or examination passes. The table below shows the types of monitoring schools employed.

Table 4.3 Methods for monitoring adult student progress

	schools (n = 60)	
	number	%
informal subject teacher feedback	52	87
informal student feedback	50	83
attendance records	47	78
course completion rates	44	73
number of examination passes achieved	44	73
drop-out rates	43	72
number of module certificates received	41	68
formal subject teacher evaluation	18	30
formal student evaluation	16	27

Few schools engaged in formal staff or student evaluation. Some schools have well-developed networks for collecting informal feedback, such as sending out letters to adult students at regular intervals to check on progress and co-ordinating groups of adults which report at regular intervals to the school management team. This data does raise the question, however, of the extent to which schools actively seek information about adult students' success or failure and consequently about the appropriateness of the courses they offer.

We were interested in knowing how the schools used the data they collected. The most common uses were the informing of future course provision and guidance services.

Table 4.4 Uses of monitoring data

	schools (n = 46)	
	number	%
inform course provision in future (type of course, range, mode of provision, etc)	22	48
inform guidance work (including tracing erratic attenders and drop-outs)	21	46
collection of information (including providing references for former students; maintaining attendance records)	16	35
successes used for publicity purposes	5	11

Schools used the data they collected to evaluate the courses they were running and to make decisions about what would be provided in the future. Successful courses were identified from course completion rates, the certificates awarded, and via student and staff feedback. Students' views were also sought on improvements to current provision. It was recognised that establishing appropriate provision was 'a matter of trial and error' and that students' opinions 'even if not clearly articulated' were vital for this process to succeed.

Informing guidance work was also an important aim of monitoring: schools used both formal evidence such as attendance records and informally gathered information to identify erratic attenders, those who seemed to have dropped out of courses, and other students in difficulties, for the purpose of alerting those responsible for adult guidance.

One of the principal purposes of monitoring appeared to be the collection and maintenance of records: attendance records, course completion records, certificates awarded, etc. These were then used as necessary – for example, to support funding claims and to provide references for students.

However, some schools found it difficult even to collate records. 'It just sits on my desk!' was a comment from one of a number of respondents (14) who said that no use was made of monitoring data. In some cases, respondents in this group explained that lack of time made it impossible for them to analyse the data that was collected. This seems unfortunate. Schools which fail to provide time for monitoring to be carried out effectively and for the results to be collated and interpreted risk problems which may turn out to be more time-consuming in the long run. This could be particularly true if lack of monitoring leads to high levels of non-completion and dissatisfaction among students who do remain on their courses. Schools do not only risk losing a substantial number of current students if problems are not identified early. They may also have difficulties in attracting students in the future, especially if word of mouth is the main way in which potential students come to hear about their provision.

Schools' links with other providers

As we shall see almost a quarter of the adults in the survey returned principally to gain skills or qualifications for employment. In addition, the adults surveyed were most likely to seek guidance related to further study and employment. Adults often find it very difficult to obtain the kind of information they need for progression. Our own earlier study drew attention to the lack of information, advice or support adults said they received at this important stage in their educational development. HMI (1992b) have pointed out that schools have a duty to provide careers advice for *all* their students, regardless of age, and that few schools have acted on the implications of this for adult learners. Our companion study on progression in adult education (Munn et al, 1993) has stressed the importance of collaboration between providers if progression is to be effective. We were therefore particularly interested in finding out about the support schools were able to give to adults who were planning to move on from school to other educational settings – whether further or higher education or community provision – and also to those hoping to return to work. Specifically, we asked our respondents to tell us whether they had links with other educational providers and with employers, and to describe the nature of these links.

Respondents from 61 schools in the sample indicated that their school had links with at least one other type of educational provider. Eleven schools had no links with other providers.

Table 4.5 *Links with other providers of adult education*

	schools (n = 61)	
	number	%
FE colleges	56	92
community education service	50	82
universities	38	62
other providers [#]	13	21

[#]Other providers included other schools in the area which took adult students, and a variety of industrial and commercial training providers.

Links with other providers appeared to be extensive. When we examined the nature of the links that many of the respondents described, however, it emerged that in many cases these were 'passive' or 'inert' links, which respondents were unable to describe in anything more than the vaguest of terms. 'Informal links' was a popular phrase. Others saw links simply in terms of having literature about universities, local colleges or other providers available for students' use.

Some respondents saw their own institution as being in competition with others and therefore were unwilling to make contact or encourage their own students to find out about provision elsewhere. Others seemed to take the view that different providers attract different types of students, and that consequently, there was little point in making contact. One respondent commented:

We have very limited links with the CES ... We have a different clientele. There would be no benefit to us from getting more involved with community education.

Another complained that universities were not interested in adult students, but clearly felt that the onus was on the universities to take the initiative:

Universities are interested in 17 and 18 year olds and don't make approaches in relation to older students.

In many cases, the range of activities respondents described as links between their schools and other providers were likely to facilitate student movement only indirectly. Such activities included joint publicity, information sharing and joint course planning. This last feature might lead to shared course provision (two respondents, for example, described linking with FE colleges to enhance course content or provide access to facilities which were unavailable or oversubscribed in the school) but often, the aim was to avoid duplication or overlap of provision. In general, these links may have a role to play in raising awareness among students of other types of provision and in ensuring more informed guidance in relation to college provision from staff, through their involvement in information sharing or joint planning sessions. They do not appear directly to promote student progression.

Only a few respondents were able to describe links which had the specific aim of encouraging adult student movement from one provider to another. Five

respondents mentioned schemes such as 'pre-Access' courses to further education and others offered guaranteed college places to adults from schools. Six respondents indicated that their provision had developed in close collaboration with the Community Education Service and that students moved easily between the two forms of provision. This was particularly likely when community education took place in the school building or where school co-ordinators were themselves community education workers. Four respondents noted their schools' involvement in schemes designed specifically to help adults make the transition from school to higher education, such as university special entrance programmes.

We also asked our respondents whether their schools had links with any of the potential employers of their adult students. Very few schools (15) stated that they had such links, and the majority of these made it clear that their links were primarily for younger pupils, though adults could be included in work experience or placement schemes. One respondent who appeared to have examined the possibilities in some detail, however, explained that for legal reasons, it is extremely difficult to include adults on work experience schemes. This suggests that the likelihood of this happening in other schools is rare. None of the respondents mentioned links which had been expressly developed to help adults move from school to employment. HMI (1992b) have advised that Local Enterprise Companies should be made aware that schools are playing a retraining as well as a general educational role. Liaising with LECs would be a useful start for any school eager to expand its links with employers.

Providers seem well aware that the intentions of many of the adult returners are to acquire the skills or qualifications which would enable them to find a job. Yet schools appear to provide very little support for those who seek to fulfil these ambitions. Not only were we unable to find any evidence of well-developed links with employers but few schools drew on the expertise of adult careers advice services. It is noteworthy that although 24% of our student sample reported that they had returned to school with the primary intention of gaining either the qualifications or the skills they needed to return to work, only 4% reported that they had achieved this. Perhaps even more serious is the fact that only 5% were still intending to look for a job by the time they were completing their courses. In part this is no doubt a reflection of the lack of opportunities in the local labour market. It would also be in part, a consequence of inadequate guidance provision. It appears that a large number of adults in the sample have changed their goals and are now intending to take additional courses at the same or higher level in the school where they had been studying. As we shall see there can be a number of reasons for adults altering their goals over time. These data from school staff imply that one explanation would be schools' lack of constructive support for adults looking for jobs.

It may be inevitable that attracting adults to schools and ensuring that a substantial number stay on has a higher priority for schools than facilitating progression routes on to other forms of education and employment. It was striking, nonetheless, that such low numbers of schools reported clearly thought-out schemes to encourage adults to continue their educational progress, particularly as schools are often the 'way in' to further and higher education for many adults. It was also an interesting finding that none of the schools in our sample appeared to have developed constructive links with employers for their adult students, despite the provision of programmes such as work experience and Compacts for their younger students.

■ Summary

Guidance staff

Most schools reported differences between the guidance needs of adults and those of younger students. Schools generally had appointed a member of staff to deal with adult guidance issues, though this was rarely a sole responsibility. It was extremely rare for staff – whether designated adult guidance teachers or others – to have received any training in adult guidance. Respondents were aware that adults would often approach their own subject teachers in the first instance, rather than the designated guidance specialist. Few schools had links with external providers of guidance services. There was a general recognition of the need for training in adult guidance.

Adults' guidance needs

Adults received guidance when selecting their courses, although choice of subject was often a matter of individual student preference. Most respondents felt the majority of adults wanted information about course availability and career opportunities. Few adults were believed to want financial advice from school staff.

Facilities

Schools appeared to have been most active and effective in providing facilities which directly support adults' learning and enable them to overcome some of the barriers they face in returning to education. These facilities included free crèche provision on demand; lounges for adults only; and free or inexpensive courses.

Progression

Most schools adopted a rather informal approach towards monitoring student progress. There were few well thought-out links between schools and other educational providers or employers. There was a lack of awareness and expertise in issues relating specifically to adults' progress while in school and at the point of progressing onwards to other areas. Though a minority of schools showed considerable initiative in supporting students in the choices they made about courses and in the links they had forged with other providers of adult education in order to encourage progression, most adopted a passive role at all stages.

5 Adults returning to school

There are two factors which lead to adults' return to education and it is the interplay of these factors which is crucial in forming the choices that adults make. We call these factors *goals* and *conditions*. When we speak of adults' goals, we speak of their motives or purposes for returning. What do they hope to gain from participation? What particular outcomes do they anticipate? Often, adults return to education because they want to gain something from the experience; either qualifications, or improved skills, or new friends. Goals are just one factor, however. The other is the conditions or life circumstances that play a role in formulating participation. Key personal conditions are age, gender, and previous educational experience. External conditions, such as the availability of suitable provision and information about this availability, are also important. Sometimes, adults can return to education with no goals at all, because a variety of circumstances have drawn them towards participation. Generally, however, adults' goals and conditions interact – often in very complex ways – so that participation results. We now turn away from the views of school staff, to the data we collected from adult student respondents concerning goals and conditions influencing their decision to return to school.

■ Goals

A number of previous quantitative surveys have attempted to uncover adults' reasons for returning to education. The data from these surveys have been used to categorise learners into groups according to their response – and thus generate motivational typologies. Morstain and Smart (1974), for example, identified six groups of learners each distinguished by a different goal, whilst McGivney (1990) identified seven such groups. Qualitative studies, however, have disclosed a more complex situation. In-depth interviews with participants have revealed that adults can have one goal or many – and that some participants have no goals at all. Goals can be long-term or short-term, and can change over time. Whilst sometimes a single, most important goal can be identified, it is often the case that the situation is not so clear. Since the goals of adults are vital in determining many of their participation choices, researchers and providers simplify them at their peril. Although in this study a certain degree of compartmentalisation was necessary – given the limitations of questionnaire design – we were determined that the potential complexity of the picture, if valid, be retained. We therefore adopted a strategy we hoped would accomplish the dual purpose of finding out the reasons why adults had returned to school whilst at the same time allowing a certain degree of freedom in response. This is described more fully in the following section.

The results of the survey confirmed that the issues surrounding adults' purposes for return are complex indeed. We found that adults returned to school to realise a wide variety of goals – and that most adults return for a multiplicity

of purposes. Often, this multiplicity conceals a mixture of different types of goals. To categorise adults as exclusively 'employment' or 'enjoyment' oriented, for example, is false and simplistic. In addition, adults with a wide variety of employment and personal goals were pursuing courses in most subjects: the distinction between vocational and non-vocational courses is therefore arbitrary and misleading. We discuss these two themes in more detail, below.

■ The data

Respondents were given a list of 15 possible reasons for their return to education and asked to tick as many as they felt applied to them. The list contained a mixture of goals drawn from the literature and our earlier, qualitative study. By allowing respondents to choose as many items as they liked, we hoped to avoid forcing adults into certain categories – and to see how varied their goals actually were. We deliberately strove to avoid the generation of a simple taxonomy of purposes for return, which is common in quantitative surveys.

The following table shows the percentage of adults who indicated they shared each reason for participation. Only ten people ticked just one goal – and nine people ticked more than ten! Most ticked between two and six.

Table 5.1 Percentages of adults reporting their purposes in returning to education

	% of respondents (n = 396)
for interest/enjoyment	83
for new challenges	66
to gain new skills for personal satisfaction	63
to gain qualifications for personal satisfaction	53
to meet new people	46
to learn for the sake of learning	44
to gain qualifications for a better job	38
to get out of the house	37
to gain new skills for a better job	36
to gain qualifications for another course	25
progressed from a previous course	14
came along with a group of friends	11
to help children with their homework	10
to finish schooling	8
to get childcare	3

We were interested to see that the six most commonly-stated reasons for participation were associated with personal goals: seeking interest and enjoyment, new challenges, and personal satisfaction gained through the acquiring of new skills and qualifications. So-called 'employment goals' such as gaining qualifications with the hope of securing a better job, appear well down the list. Whilst the literature tells us that most adults return for employment reasons, we shall see below in our discussion of conditions that the life circumstances of many in our sample were such that employment was either undesirable or not seen as an option at the present time.

Mixtures of goals

Our previous work argued against classifying learners according to their goals, because many adults return to education for a range of reasons. Yet quantitative studies in the past have tended to distinguish between adults who hoped to gain employment at the end of their courses and those who returned for reasons of personal satisfaction only. We were eager to see how far our own survey data allowed adults to be categorised in this manner. In order to discover this, it was necessary to divide learners' goals into two categories and then examine them by asking the following three questions:

- How many adults had one single [instrumental or personal] reason for return?
- If adults had more than one reason for return, were these exclusively instrumental or personal, or did adults participate in order to realise a mixture of goals?
- Did some goals appear to supplement others, rather than serve as primary purposes in themselves?

We defined instrumental goals as those which relate to the realisation of progression opportunities in education or the gaining of employment. Personal goals centre upon individuals' desire to return for more intangible benefits such as enjoyment and satisfaction. Of course, these two categories are not neatly defined, and to some extent our division of goals may be debated. Nonetheless, these two groupings provide a starting-point from which to examine the mixtures and hierarchies of students' goals.

Instrumental goals	Personal goals
to gain qualifications for a better job	for interest/enjoyment
to gain new skills for a better job	for new challenges
to gain qualifications for another course	to gain new skills for personal satisfaction
progressed from a previous course	to meet new people
	to learn for the sake of learning
	to get out of the house
	to accompany friends
	to help children with their homework
	to finish schooling
	to get childcare

Using these categories, we found that only two percent of the adults reported instrumental goals exclusively, whilst 40 per cent reported personal goals only. The majority of respondents (58 per cent) reported a mixture of both instrumental and personal goals. This finding is important for two reasons. First, it reinforces the conclusion drawn from our qualitative study that the attempt to classify learners according to goals (as quantitative studies tend to do) is a misleading concealment of the complexities of participation. Second, it confirms our earlier conclusion that schools provide an attractive setting for the realisation of a wide

variety of goals. If most adults participate for a mixture of reasons, then it follows that making choices about courses and progression opportunities will not be simple – as we shall see in later discussions. Schools, catering as they do for a wide range of purposes, must be alert to adults' varying aims and objectives, and take these into account when determining course and guidance provision.

If most adults reported a wide variety of reasons for returning to education, how far were they able to identify one main goal? Did some goals emerge as more influential than others? We asked all respondents to indicate whether they had one reason for participating that was more important than the rest. Slightly less than half (48%) indicated that they did: the majority were unable to identify a single, most important reason for return. Of those who could identify a single objective, most (68%) reported a personal goal.

Table 5.2 Percentages of respondents with one most important purpose for participation

	% of respondents (n = 192)
to gain new skills for personal satisfaction	19
to gain qualifications for a better job	18
for interest/enjoyment	14
for new challenges	11
to gain qualifications for personal satisfaction	10
to gain qualifications for another course	8
to gain new skills for a better job	6
to learn for the sake of learning	5
other	9

We had hypothesised that personal goals might supplement instrumental goals rather than serve as primary goals in themselves. Clearly, this was not the case in many instances. Indeed, for those who gave one main reason for return, gaining skills for personal satisfaction was the most common. It is interesting to note that these individuals chose *education* as a means of realising such aims, rather than some other pursuit. Again, schools must be alert to the fact that many adults may not perceive their participation as education in the traditional sense, but as a hobby, leisure pursuit or avoidance strategy.

Goals and the choice of course and subject

Can schools predict the sorts of provision that will appeal to adults with particular goals? Our previous work suggested that to distinguish between 'vocational' and 'non-vocational' courses is unhelpful, as adults can take a wide variety of courses even when pursuing similar-sounding goals. Whilst many adults with personal goals enrol in 'non-vocational' courses such as swimming or sewing, for example, some also attend more 'vocational' classes such as computing and accounting for pleasure. Similarly, many subjects, such as English language and mathematics, appeal to adults with a wide range of goals.

In our analysis, we considered the relationship between subject choice and adults' stated reasons for return. We have already seen that the majority of adults were participating for a mixture of personal and instrumental reasons. It would

be impossible for them to choose a wholly vocational or non-vocational course as they would be seeking to fulfil more than one type of goal. Even those adults who reported they had a most important reason for participating chose a wide range of courses. To illustrate this point, the following table shows the number of adults with one main instrumental or personal goal and the courses they chose. Of course, many adults were pursuing more than one subject.

Table 5.3 Goals and subject choice

	instrumental goal	personal goal	total
English	14	18	32
IT	29	33	62
crafts	5	20	25
history	8	12	20
science	9	8	17
maths	20	11	31
art	4	20	24
home economics	3	10	13
accounts	5	3	8
sport	0	9	9
computing	8	13	21
languages	2	4	6

Many subjects, such as English, information technology, accounting and computing, appeared to fulfil both personal and instrumental goals. Indeed, most subjects accomplished this dual purpose. Only one subject (sport / keep fit) appealed to those with personal goals only and no courses were exclusive to those with only instrumental goals. These data confirm that the distinction between vocational and non-vocational courses is, in the eyes of adult participants, an arbitrary one. We have stated before the importance of this finding: it is impossible to distinguish between job-related and non-job-related courses, and funding targets which seek to do so discriminate against adult participants.

■ Life circumstances

Goals are only one factor determining participation, however. Adults' life circumstances are also important in determining whether or not they are desirous of or able to return. We were interested in discovering the range of life circumstances of those in our sample and the effects differing circumstances might have upon goals and participation choices. In particular, we focused upon six respondent characteristics which the literature and our previous work suggested were salient to the choices adults necessarily make when returning to education. These life circumstances are:

- age
- gender
- family situation

- employment
- school experience
- post-school educational experience (prior to current participation).

We found that adults of widely differing circumstances were returning to school. Importantly, there was no evidence that similar-sounding conditions necessarily generated particular goals or led individuals to make particular choices. Although most older adults were participating for personal reasons, for example, this was not always the case – and they could be found studying subjects at all levels. Similarly, there was no significant difference between the goals of men and women. We now turn to a discussion of each condition for which we have data, in turn. For each one, we begin with a brief description of the data and then go on to examine them with relation to respondents' goals and the participation choices they made.

Age

It is widely recognised that age is an important determinant of return to education. The majority of adult participants are under the age of 45: older adults consistently fail to take up formal educational opportunities. Those who do are statistically more likely to take part in general or recreational provision than younger learners. This is not to say that older adults see no value in participation. Our previous qualitative work suggested, for example, that age need not be a barrier to participation at *any* level – or in any setting. Indeed, we found adults of all ages pursuing a mixture of certificated and non-certificated courses in a wide range of provider settings.

Given this large survey sample, we were interested both in mapping the ages of the participants and in the degree to which age appeared to be related to goals and course choice. We look first at the ages of those in our sample.

Figure 5.1 The ages of the sample



These adult returners ranged comprehensively in age, confirming the appeal of schools to a wide client group. One-third of the adults were aged over 56 and almost half (42%) were aged over 46 – an age group generally under-represented in education. Schools appear to be extremely successful in attracting older adults.

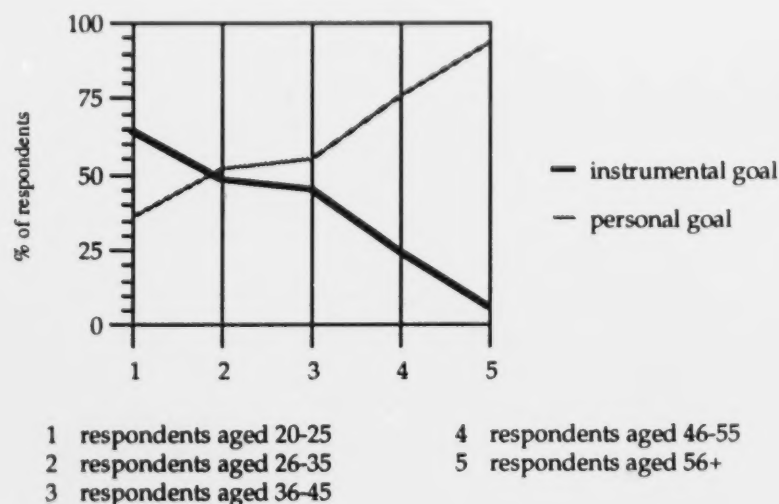
Did the goals of respondents of different ages vary significantly? Our earlier findings suggested that, for the most part, stage was a more important determinant of goals than age – and that older adults were not unlikely to report instrumental purposes for return. This was largely borne out by the data for this study. When we analysed all occurrences of the 15 goals in relation to respondents' ages, for example, significant (though broad) differences emerged for 7 of them.

Table 5.4 Respondents' age and goals

	most likely adults	least likely adults
to gain qualifications for a better job	26-45	56+
to gain new skills for a better job	26-45	56+
to gain qualifications for personal satisfaction	56+	26-35
to gain new skills for personal satisfaction	20-25	46-55
to gain qualifications for another course	56+	20-25
to learn for the sake of learning	20-25; 56+	46-55
to get out of the house	36-45; 56+	20-25

These data confirm our earlier findings. The instrumental goal of gaining qualifications in order to secure a better job, for example, was least likely to be reported by older adults. This goal was most likely to be reported by adults aged 26 to 45 – but this represents an age span of 20 years! So although we might conclude that some instrumental goals are particular to younger adults, we can be no more specific than this. The stage of life these adults have reached is more important than their actual calendar age. A woman might be seeking work after her children are old enough to go to school – but this might be when she is 26 or 40. Another individual might need to find a new job after having been made redundant – this could happen to anyone regardless of his or her age.

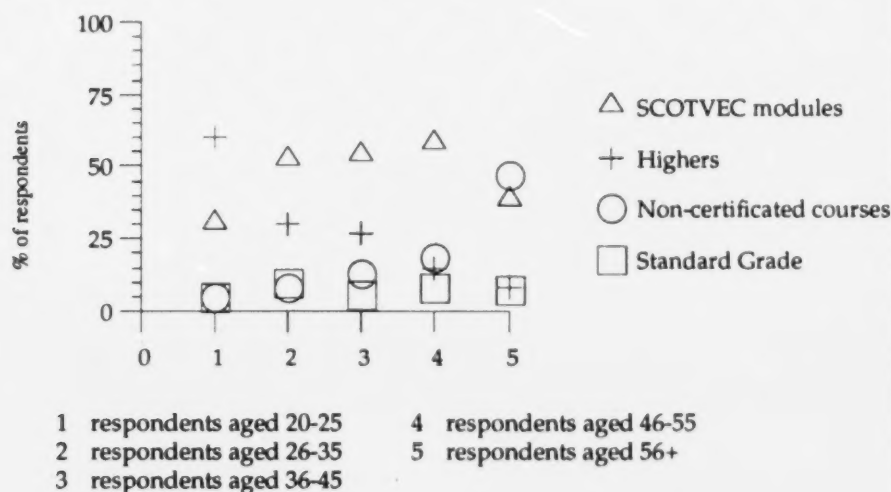
An alternative way of considering the data is to examine the ages of the 192 people who reported that they had one main reason for participation. We have seen that the majority overall were participating for personal reasons. The majority of adults aged 20-25 (and almost half of those aged 26-35), however, were participating for instrumental reasons. The numbers participating for instrumental reasons decreased as respondents' age increased – but there were still three adults aged over 56 whose main goal for returning to education was instrumental.

Figure 5.2 Respondents' age and main goal (n=192)

How far did age appear to be related to subject and level studied? We have already reported that older adults participate most commonly in uncertificated courses whilst younger adults tend towards work-based training. This is, presumably, because older adults have more personal reasons for participation. Yet, as we have seen in our discussion of goals, classifying learners in this way is mistaken. What does this imply about traditional notions of the sorts of courses that appeal to older adults? In our sample, adults of all ages studied all subjects: the only exceptions to this were sciences (not studied by any adults aged over 45); business studies (not studied by any adults aged between 46 and 55) and maths (not studied by any adults aged over 55). This is consistent with the finding that adults pursue a variety of subjects for similar-sounding purposes – and that the degree to which subjects are 'enjoyable' is in the eye of the beholder.

All levels appealed to adults of all ages, too, as the following figure shows:

Figure 5.3 Respondents' age and level of participation



This figure reveals that some levels of course appealed more to some age groups than others. Most of those aged 20-25, for example, were studying at Higher level. The single largest group of those over the age of 56 (but not the majority) were enrolled in non-certificated courses. In many respects, however, it is the lower percentages that are more revealing for what they represent. Thirty-eight per cent of those adults aged over 56 were pursuing Scotvec modules. Clearly, they did not feel that enjoyment and certification were mutually exclusive. Indeed, we have seen that gaining a qualification could, in itself, be an important *personal* goal. Thus, the idea of leisure is not a straight forward one, and providers should not assume that older adults returning for personal reasons will naturally drift towards non-certificated courses in sewing or flower arranging.

Scotvec modules appeal greatly to most adults, whatever their age and purpose for return. We alert readers again to the time of year in which this survey was conducted and suggest that this could account for low numbers of adults in 'examination' classes. Our previous work, however, suggests that modular learning and its assessment suit older learners well, and this appears to be

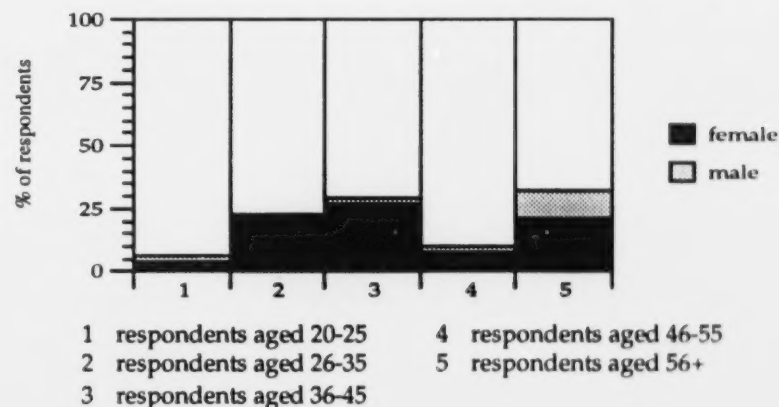
confirmed by high numbers of all ages pursuing modules in this survey. We will return to this issue in our discussion of teaching and learning.

Gender and family circumstances

We know that men are more likely than women to pursue work-related courses (although we have already pointed out the difficulties in testing such a finding when the definition of work-related is illusory) whilst some groups of women (particularly those with small children) consistently fail to return to education. Our qualitative work suggested, however, that there were no real differences between men and women's goals – that each was as likely as the other to participate for personal or instrumental reasons. We also found, however, that men's and women's roles within their families greatly affected subsequent participation choices: although women with pre-school children were often eager to participate (generally in the hopes of returning to the labour market), this could only be facilitated through providers' supplying affordable childcare opportunities on demand. Men were more likely than women to choose provision which interfered as little as possible with their jobs, if they were employed – and this meant that daytime classes in schools were often out of the question.

Data from our questionnaire sample confirmed these demographics – although this will not be news to schools themselves! Figure 5.4 shows a breakdown of the gender of respondents, by their ages.

Figure 5.4 Respondents' age and gender



The majority of the sample, 82%, were women. Whilst most of them fell between the ages of 26 and 45, most of the men were over the age of 56. This, too, is consistent with the trend that only men who are not in work can easily attend classes in school (we shall return to this issue in our discussion of the employment situation of those in the sample). The small number of younger men is striking, but consistent with national demographics for school participation (see Appendix C).

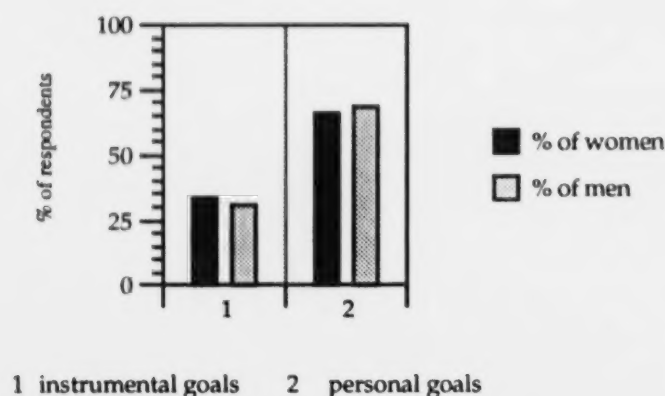
We also asked respondents a number of questions about their family situation: whether or not they were single or had a permanent partner; whether or not they had any children; and who cared for pre-school children whilst their parents were in school.

The vast majority of respondents, 72%, were either married or in a permanent relationship. 10% were single; 10% were widowed and 8% were divorced. It is interesting that most of those in the sample were not living on their own, because as we shall see in our discussion of sustaining participation, the support of a partner was often important in ensuring successful participation.

Of the 76 adults with pre-school children, 58 (76%) relied upon the school crèche. The rest left their children in the care of family or friends when they were in school. Only four men in the sample had pre-school children: one of these relied upon the school crèche for childcare provision; the other three relied on their partners, family or friends. The vast majority of women with small children used their provider's crèche in preference to any other carer whilst they were in school. As we saw in Chapter 2, the availability of such crèches was vital in determining whether or not such women returned at all.

Did the goals of men and women differ? It is difficult, because of the preponderance in the sample of men aged over 56, to test for variance in goals because they are, in part, a function of age. It is interesting to note, however, that in our sample there was no significant difference between men and women's main goal. At any rate, we have argued that individuals' goals are not a good determinant of the provision they choose. Schools should be aware that the men and women they attract at present do not differ in respect of goals. We speculate that this would also be true if the sample included more younger men. Schools should remember that course suitability is in the eye of the beholder and not be tempted to develop provision that 'caters' for men and women's differing goals.

Figure 5.5 Respondents' gender and main goal



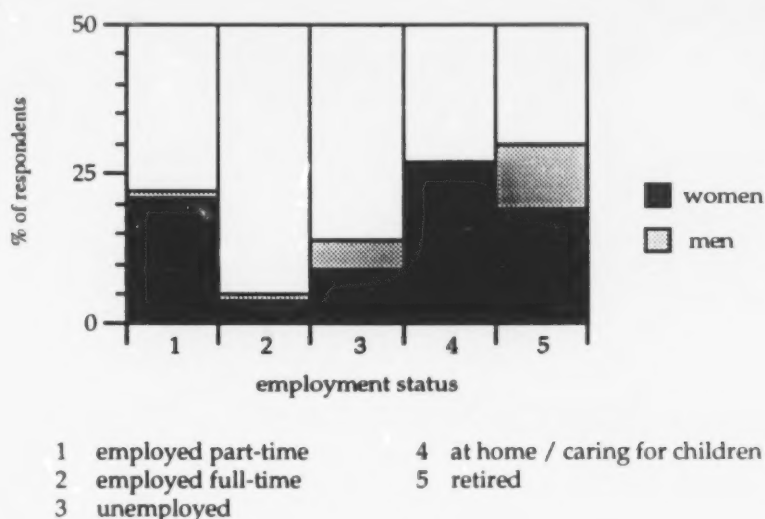
Women were more likely than men, however, to report that they had multiple, more personal, goals. These goals included wanting to help their children with homework; avoidance; wanting to meet new people; seeking new challenges; and the satisfaction that can result from gaining qualifications. Is it the case that more women than men often see wider benefits accruing from participation? Since most men were participating for personal reasons in the first place, it is difficult to tell. It is possible, however, that women who have been out of work for some time at home and caring for children have complex emotional and psychological needs that extend beyond simply getting a job – and therefore more complex expectations of what education can provide for them.

Employment situation

Previous surveys have revealed that most adult returners participate for the purpose of gaining a new job, advancing in a job already held, or for other employment reasons. We have already seen that personal goals were more common than instrumental goals for those in our own sample. But how far did adults' employment situation appear to have a bearing on their return to school?

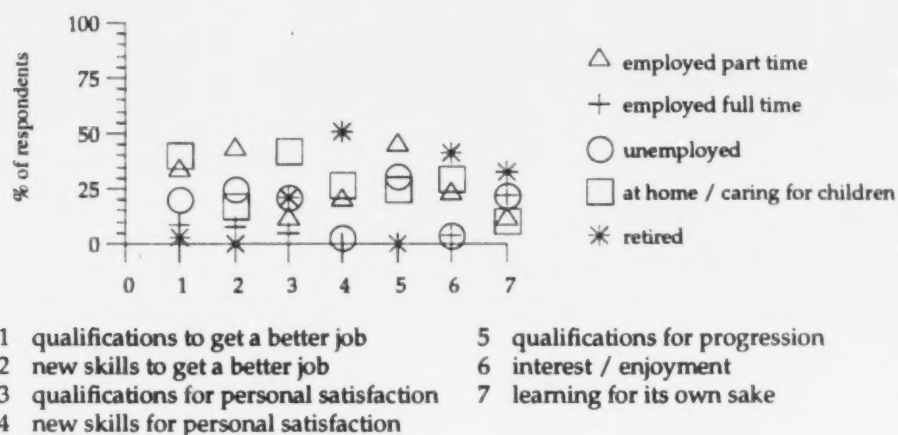
We asked respondents to tell us about their employment status by requesting them to tick the boxes which most closely resembled their situation. A variety of situations emerged, with the two largest groups either retired from work (in fact, most of the men in the sample) or at home caring for children (a group composed entirely of women).

Figure 5.6 Respondents' employment status



In addition, two per cent of the sample were on Employment Training and one per cent were on invalidity benefit or were disabled. We had hypothesised that school would appeal greatly to women at home (not relying upon unemployment benefit, but supported by their partners) and retired people, as they tend to have at least some free time during the day. This was borne out by the data, as we have seen. We were interested to discover that an additional 27% of respondents were in work: 22% part-time and 5% full-time. Clearly, school timetables are not too inconvenient to exclude individuals trying to juggle studying with job commitments.

What did working adults hope to achieve through participation? Most of those employed full-time were 'learning for its own sake'. Most part time workers, on the other hand, were trying to learn new skills, either to get a better job or to qualify for more advanced courses. Figure 5.7 shows the employment situations of all 192 individuals who reported that they had one main purpose for participation.

Figure 5.7 Respondents' employment situation and main goals

The graph reveals some other interesting differences. The most common goal for retired people, for example, was to gain new skills for personal satisfaction. The largest group seeking qualifications for a better job were women at home. This is perhaps not so surprising, as we had hypothesised that many such women participate in the hope of gaining qualifications for re-entry into the labour market. We have seen that many of those with part-time jobs were seeking the skills they felt would help them to secure a better job – so school was seen as a suitable setting for realising job advancement as well as initial employment – and for the gaining of instrumental skills as well as qualifications.

Many women at home were also seeking qualifications for personal, rather than instrumental reasons. We found in our previous study that women at home often do not feel ready to return to work when their children are young or, indeed, have no plans to return to work at all. Yet they often find the role of 'housewife' to be a rather stultifying one, and seek the enhanced self-image that gaining qualifications can provide. Such women are often not satisfied with uncertificated courses, because they see the qualification – be it Level 1 French or Higher biology – as concrete evidence of their new skills and knowledge. Schools appear to appeal greatly to these women – no doubt because they often offer childcare facilities.

School experience

Past studies have suggested that negative educational experience, particularly at school, can subsequently act as a barrier to participation. We concluded from our qualitative work, however, that negative school experience in itself is not sufficient to deter adults from returning to education. Indeed, in that study, many of those who had returned to school as adult students reported that they had loathed school when they were younger. We concluded that school experience affected subsequent participation only insofar as the qualifications with which individuals left school largely determined the qualifications they sought later on. Most of those with no qualifications, for example, were pursuing Standard Grade courses or Scotvec modules in school, whilst most of those who had left school with Standard Grade passes were pursuing Highers in school and college. We were

struck at the time by the conventional notions of progression that the respondents displayed, often choosing to return to school in the first instance to pursue the qualifications they had not obtained the first time around.

We were interested to see if the data from this large-scale survey confirmed these findings. We asked respondents whether they had liked or disliked school, and what qualifications they had gained before they left. We found that negative school experience was not sufficient to deter adults the second or third time round.

Table 5.5 Respondents' school qualifications and experience

school experience (% of respondents, n=347)							
	positive		negative		ambivalent		total
	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	
none	7	5	10	7	3	1	33
lowers*	7	3	4	3	0	1	18
'O' grades	9	4	7	3	2	1	26
Highers	13	3	4	1	2	1	24
total	36	15	25	14	7	1	100

Italic numbers (labelled 'a') denote those respondents for whom this was not the first return to education.

Bold numbers (labelled 'b') denote those respondents for whom this was the first return to education.

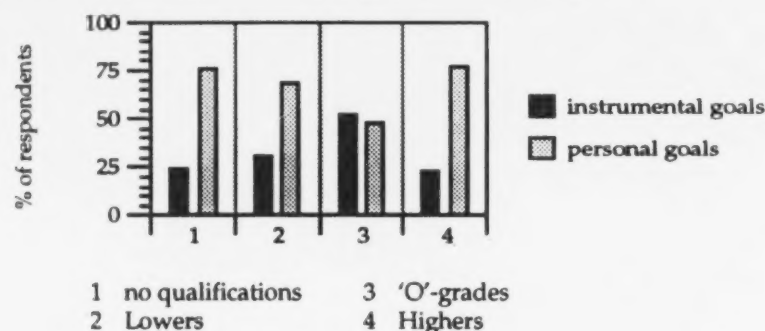
* standard leaving qualification before the introduction of O-grades

Current participation in school represented the first return to education for one in three respondents (30%); most had already participated in other school courses; college courses; uncertificated classes or other forms of education. Thirty-nine per cent of respondents overall reported that they had had a negative experience at school when they were younger. Interestingly, 14% of the sample had had a negative experience at school and yet had chosen school as their first point of return to education. One-third of the sample had left school with no qualifications, although some of these adults had enjoyed their school days. These figures confirm the idea that adults with negative past educational experience come to see the value of schooling – and school qualifications – and often choose to pursue courses in school when they have no other educational experience.

It is important to remember, however, that schools appeal to a wide variety of adults, many of whom appear to defy traditional progression patterns. One in four of respondents in this sample returned to school even though they had gained Highers before they left the first time. Many of these had had a positive experience at school. Why did they choose to return rather than pursue courses at college or even university? It is possible that, having enjoyed school and left with the sense of accomplishment that accompanies more advanced qualifications, these individuals were likely to view a repeat of the experience as a pleasurable and fulfilling activity. The fact that the vast majority of those with Highers (and who reported one main goal) were participating for purely personal reasons seems to confirm this hypothesis.

How far did the qualifications with which respondents had left school seem to relate to their main reasons for returning to education? The following figure compares the main goal of those respondents who reported they had one with the qualifications with which they had left school.

Figure 5.8 Respondents' school qualifications and main goal



Whilst the majority of adults overall were participating for personal reasons, this is not the case for those adults who left school with 'O'-grades only. A high proportion of these had disliked school when they were pupils. These adults were the least likely to feel that their qualifications were sufficient for their employment needs and were most likely to be participating in order to get job qualifications or qualifications so they could progress onto another course. Our qualitative work has shown that such adults are likely to come to see the value of school qualifications when they perceive themselves to be disadvantaged in the labour market. Such adults are likely to have high hopes that the qualifications they receive upon return will be sufficient to help them realise their goals. Schools should be sensitive to such adults' goals and experiences of school, and take these into account when offering advice and support. We shall return to this issue in our discussion of guidance.

Post-school educational experience

We have already seen that 68% of the adults in our sample had already returned to education prior to their current participation in school. We asked them to tell us what sort of participation this had been. There was an enormous range of experience, from uncertificated courses such as swimming or woodwork to further degrees. In the table below, many respondents are counted more than once, because they had engaged in more than one educational activity in the past.

Table 5.6 Respondents' post-school education experience

	% of respondents (n = 266)
courses at college leading to a qualification	62
uncertificated courses	49
courses at school leading to a qualification	27
job-related training at place of employment	26
youth training at college	4
degree	1

These data appear to contradict the idea that progression is always onwards and upwards, through more and more demanding courses, from school to tertiary level providers. For example, most of these adults had already gone to college to pursue certificated courses before returning to school. Why did they choose to take what appears to be a 'backwards' step? We have no data to explain this for these adults, but our previous work suggests two possible reasons: it is possible that their experience of college had been a negative one, encouraging them to seek an alternative setting for their education; or their time at college could have been in the remote past and the qualifications received subsequently out of date. Seventy-six per cent of the sample had previously been involved either in uncertificated courses (at school or another provider) or certificated courses at school: progression sideways through the system (as opposed to onwards and upwards) appears to be very common for adult students at school. We shall return to the issue of progression in our discussion of *gains*.

■ Summary

Purposes for return

Adults returned to school to realise a wide variety of instrumental and personal goals. It was impossible to categorise adults by their goals: the majority were participating for a mixture of reasons.

Goals and subject choice

Few school subjects appealed to learners with particular goals only: most subjects were seen to be appropriate for both instrumental and personal purposes. Distinguishing between vocational and non-vocational courses is therefore not possible.

Age

School learning appeals to adults of all ages. Although adults over the age of 56 are more likely to participate for personal rather than instrumental reasons, this is not always the case. All levels of subjects – modular, Standard Grade, Higher, or uncertificated – appealed to learners of all ages.

Gender

Women in the sample greatly outnumbered men. There were no significant differences between men's and women's goals in the sample.

Employment situation

Most of those in the sample described themselves as either retired or at home caring for children. A third large group was employed part-time. Participants in each of these groups had both personal and instrumental goals.

School experience

Adults returned to school with a wide range of school experiences and qualifications. Many had disliked school and left without qualifications, although others had enjoyed school and left with Highers. Negative school experience was insufficient to deter these adults from returning later in life.

Post-school educational experience

Most of the adults in the sample had already participated in some form of post-school education prior to returning to school. Their experience ranged from uncertificated courses in school or at other providers to degree courses at university. These data challenge many conventional notions of progression onwards and upwards through the education system.

6 Staying on course

Our previous work suggested that there was much providers could do to enable adult students to juggle their many responsibilities, enjoy their studies, and complete their courses. In the questionnaire, we addressed three particular areas the earlier interviews had revealed to be significant: institutional factors (such as facilities, costs, and culture); teaching and learning; and guidance. We were particularly interested in the ways in which schools were able to meet the needs of adults fulfilling two very different (and not always compatible) roles: that of independent individuals with responsibilities in the 'real' world and of more dependent learners trying to fit in to school and student culture.

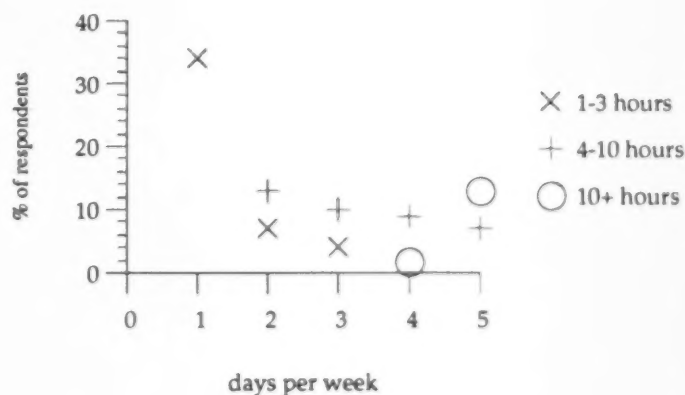
■ Fitting school in

We know that adults adopt a wide range of strategies for accommodating their studies in their busy lives. Often, they cope in very different ways with similar-sounding situations: one woman with small children may decide to do only a few courses so that they are not left in the school crèche too long; another woman in the same circumstances may choose to come to school full-time in order to gain all the qualifications she needs more quickly. We concluded from our earlier work that to categorise adults into 'types' and then assume that certain types will be attracted to certain forms of provision is fallacious – and we have already seen that innumerable 'types' were present in this sample! We were interested in discovering, therefore, the sorts of external commitments these adults had; the degree to which these influenced adults' choosing how much time to spend in school; and how far schools were able to help adults juggle their many obligations.

Choice of provision

Adults varied greatly in the amount of time they chose to spend at school during the course of an average week.

Figure 6.1 Adults' time in school



The single largest group attended school only one day a week for less than four hours. These were mostly adults pursuing non-certificated courses in adults-only classes laid on especially for that purpose. Fifty-one adults, however, came to school five days a week. Generally, of course, these were adults pursuing examination classes in mixed classes with children, and who were obliged to follow the school timetable. This necessitated their coming in to school more often. Enrolment in just two such courses might require attendance on five different days. We were interested to note that so many adults were able to do this, attending school on a more or less full-time basis. Clearly, these adults saw their return to school as a serious occupation and expected real benefits at the end.

What sorts of commitments did adults need to take into account? We presented respondents with a list of eight items which we had drawn from our previous research, and asked them to tick as many as they liked. The following table shows overall percentages: of course, many respondents ticked more than one consideration.

Table 6.1 Determinants of time in school

	% of respondents (n = 396)
have to fit school in with family commitments	48
time no consideration	41
not wanting to do too much work	28
wanting to do just a few courses the first time back	28
have to fit school in with job commitments	17
cannot do too much due to health	6
cannot do too many hours for fear of losing benefits	4
wanting to do as many qualifications as possible at once	3

The most common consideration was commitments to family, and this was also the most important or only consideration for 104 adults. Most of those who cited this item were, unsurprisingly, women with children. In our qualitative study, we argued that where a return to education is concerned, many women both see themselves and are seen by their families as wife and mother first. Women with children and partners are often responsible for cleaning the house; cooking the family's meals; collecting the children from school; and overseeing the smooth running of the household. Studying is perceived to come second to these responsibilities, even where a partner is available to help. Many women make Herculean efforts to come back to school and providers are doubtless sensitive to this when formulating their expectations of these returners.

For 41% of adults, however, schooling was the most important activity in their lives. These respondents reported that time was no consideration and they would come into school as often as necessary to do the courses they chose. One hundred and one people said this was the only consideration that applied to them. Again unsurprisingly, most of these adults were retired: many had lost their partners. For these individuals, school played a very particular role: it got them out of the house; helped them to make new friends; and taught them new skills and interests. The expectations schools have of these adults could be very different

from those of young mothers looking for job qualifications. Of course, not all the adults in this category were pensioners returning for pleasure: a few were young adults trying to gain as many qualifications as quickly as possible to hasten progression or a return to the labour market. Could schools try to rationalise their timetables for such adults to allow them to fit the maximum number of courses into the shortest possible period? We know that some schools achieve this by teaching adults in blocks of adults-only lessons. This is one solution, although as we shall see, not always the most popular option for the adult students themselves.

Two other considerations emerged as important to particular groups of people. Adults aged 56+ were most likely to be wary of taking on too much work at once, doubtless because they lacked a certain amount of confidence as a result of a long absence from education. Men between 26 and 45 were most worried about losing their benefits – and we have seen that there were few such men in the sample. Is this one of the reasons why so few unemployed young men return to school? Adult students in school are subject to the same '21 hour rule' as part-time students in further education, but 42% of men participating in further education do so part-time. Anecdotal evidence was provided by one community education worker during a pilot interview. He suggested that Restart does not consider school courses to be a valid alternative to seeking work, and that young men participating in school courses had been threatened with benefits cuts. This view echoes previous research (Sims and Goddard, 1990). HMI (1992a) have pointed out the 'lack of availability of grants to students following part-time courses' and noted that 'regional policies on the availability of bursaries vary in this respect' (p 8). Certainly, part-time participants in most educational settings are penalised by a grants and benefits system geared towards full-time provision.

This brief discussion of how adults fitted school into other aspects of their lives, or indeed saw school as a focal point, illustrates something of the diversity of the adult student population in schools. Just as it is an oversimplification of pupils to see them as a homogenous group, so it is mistaken to see adults in schools as an undifferentiated abstract group pursuing similar goals in similar ways. This rather obvious point has important implications for teaching, for guidance and for provision which we take up in the concluding chapter.

Institutional factors

What could schools do to help adults balance their commitments? How far were schools successful in promoting such a balance? We have seen that location, childcare facilities and cost were important in helping determine provider choice. They were also vital in determining whether or not school could be accommodated in adults' busy lives. Ninety-five per cent of the sample agreed that courses should be inexpensive and 90 per cent agreed that it was important that the school be close to home. Sixty-seven per cent felt schools should offer childcare facilities.

How far did schools fulfil adults' criteria? We presented respondents with another list of opinion statements and asked them to indicate how far they agreed or disagreed with each. The statements included concerns ranging from external responsibilities ('I have trouble fitting courses in with family commitments') to finance ('Hidden costs such as books or travel make courses more expensive than they seem').

Overwhelmingly, the participants in our sample felt that their courses enabled them to juggle their commitments and that schools catered for their needs. School timetables were not felt to be too inconvenient (only 11% reported that the school timetable was inconvenient) whilst 83% and 87% disagreed that they had trouble fitting courses in with family or job commitments. Hidden costs were not felt to be a problem by 94% of respondents. Of course, our respondents were all participants. We can only guess that many adults are forced to leave their courses because the pressures of time or finance are too great for participation to be sustained. We know, however, that *where the will to study is great enough*, almost any obstacle can be overcome. The challenge facing schools (or indeed, any provider for adults) is to minimise these obstacles as far as possible by offering inexpensive and flexible courses to adults in their immediate locality.

■ Becoming a student

We have seen that adult students face a number of potential external barriers to return to education and that schools can help them overcome these. When adults enter the school, however, they often adopt a new persona – that of 'student'. The quality of this 'becoming' is another key determinant of successful participation. How far can schools help adults adapt to the rigours of study and school culture? How far do adults wish to be assimilated into student life and how far do they wish to keep themselves separate?

We found in our qualitative study that schools appear to operate by accommodating two learning cultures: those of adult and younger learner. The most successful marriage of these two cultures seemed to take place in the classroom: adults appreciated being treated 'the same' by teachers where learning was concerned and disliked being singled out in lessons. Adults often preferred mixed lessons with children because they appreciated the exchange of ideas with peers at the same stage, if not of the same age. Teachers were valued if they were friendly and accessible, but also efficient, skilled and clear in their expectations. In the classroom, adults often chose to assimilate themselves.

Adults felt they had different needs from younger students in other areas of the school, however. Returners often sought out quiet places where they could study and adults-only areas where they could relax and compare notes. Adults appreciated guidance workers whose remit was to deal with their concerns solely. The principle behind successful integration, therefore, was 'together yet apart'. How far was this idea reflected in this larger survey sample? What else could schools do to ensure a successful 'becoming' for adult students?

We now turn to a consideration of two important areas: institutional factors such as facilities and culture; and teaching and learning in the classroom.

Institutional factors

We presented respondents with a list of factors and asked them to indicate how far they agreed that each was important. The following picture of an 'ideal' school emerged.

Facilities

The school should have: accessible, modern equipment	91% agreed
useful facilities such as common rooms for adults	63% agreed
The school should have: friendly teachers	99% agreed
a relaxed atmosphere	96% agreed
adults who support one another	92% agreed
mixed classes of adults and younger pupils	74% agreed
adults-only lessons	56% agreed

These data confirm our earlier conclusions that adults appreciate a friendly, relaxed setting in which they can socialise and support one another. Additional comments on some questionnaires yielded adjectives such as 'friendly', 'welcoming', and 'happy': these were felt to be the attributes of a positive atmosphere for learning and adults praised providers who were able to foster such a climate. The people who emerged as most influential in this process were classroom teachers, often the most important point of contact between adult students and their schools. Adults were virtually unanimous in their appreciation of teachers who were friendly, supportive and encouraging and who understood their special concerns as returners to education. Twelve respondents took the opportunity provided by our questionnaire to write in praise of the school staff who had made their time at school enjoyable. One woman wrote at some length:

I must comment on the support given to me by (my teacher). Her wholehearted support managed to get me through the last two years ... She has been a great source of inspiration ... She made every effort to make me feel at home in the classroom and encouraged the children to mix with me ... I thank her wholeheartedly for her help and dedication, for which I will always be grateful.

We were encouraged to see that so many adults felt supported and accepted by their teachers – but wonder what the consequences are for adults whose experience is not so positive. Is an unsympathetic teacher enough to spoil a course? We suspect that it is, although in our sample of participants we have no way of knowing how far this is the case. Classroom teachers will be aware of the influence they have over adult returners' experience and the importance adults place on their good humour and encouragement.

We were somewhat surprised that only 63% of adults felt separate facilities such as common rooms were necessary and can only conclude that where the need is felt, it is felt keenly indeed. Many adults, of course, will come in to school for lessons only and will not feel it desirable or necessary to socialise with other students in this manner. Still others, in schools where such facilities are not on offer, may not appreciate the benefits they can provide. Perhaps some facilities – such as crèches – are more important than others and schools targeting funds should take this into account. Nonetheless, where schools did make the effort to provide a bit of space for adults – sometimes most imaginatively – adults were grateful:

We were able to use the staff room to purchase tea and coffee – this was appreciated as it was quite a dash getting a family off to school before you, yourself, join them. Sometimes a cup of coffee is very much needed!

How far did adults' need for their own space extend to the classroom? More adults preferred mixed lessons with younger students than adults-only classes, although both were favoured by the majority of the sample. Adults appreciated

being made to feel welcome by younger students and some wrote additional comments about how they felt it was important to be assimilated into the culture of younger learners. Adults wrote about 'fitting in' and 'becoming one of them'. One woman wrote:

I had a lot of respect for the pupils who were very friendly and helpful and didn't make me feel different.

In addition, adults wrote about enjoying the company of children in lessons and how their understanding of youth and its particular concerns were enhanced through participation. We surmise that pupils in schools where adults have a high profile and are seen as a 'fixture' are more accepting of adults in lessons. One individual reported feeling 'uncomfortable' as the only adult in a class of younger pupils: as this was a spontaneous comment, however, we have no way of knowing whether others shared this view.

Teaching and learning

How did adults feel about their classroom experience? Although practitioners are trained to teach secondary school pupils, they generally have no training in the teaching of adults. We wondered, therefore, how far teaching in the classroom suited adults' learning needs. We asked respondents to tell us how well they felt they learned from a range of teacher and learner-centred teaching and assessment strategies. Perhaps unsurprisingly, adults reported that a wide range of strategies help them to learn well, although it was unclear from the data how often these strategies were used in school courses.

The most popular teaching strategy by far was teacher lecture with a chance to talk and ask questions (favoured by 98% of respondents) followed closely by individual tuition (95%). Adults felt they learned least from so-called 'learner-centred' strategies such as role-play or students' deciding for themselves what to do in lessons (favoured by 51% and 41%, respectively). Fewer adults appreciated the use of technology in lessons (such as computer-aided learning or video – favoured by 65% and 66%) than more interactive approaches with the teacher and other students. We wondered about this seeming lack of popularity of learner-centred methods, particularly in light of the fact that they are often recommended for teaching adults. Do teachers offer their students adequate support in such circumstances? In at least one case, they certainly did not, as this woman wrote:

Returning to school after more than 20 years has been interesting. Teaching methods have changed and I found it difficult to adjust. For example, in the computing class I was handed the module task booklet and more or less told to get on with the work, despite the teacher knowing I had never used any computer or keyboard before! In contrast, the word processing class has been superb with proper help and instruction.

This is not to say that adults did not wish to work at their own pace. Two adults wrote that they felt they did not pick up new information quite as quickly as they had when they were younger but that this was 'outweighed by greater application and concentration.' Nonetheless, some additional support was necessary:

Your concentration tends to lapse and you do not retain information so readily [as you get older]. Hence it is important that course notes be readily available to every student for reference and assimilation of the courses in your own time and speed.

Greater differences appeared when adults were asked to comment on how far they felt various assessment strategies helped them to learn. We had hypothesised

that most adults would favour some form of continuous assessment in preference to exams. Indeed, the vast majority preferred continuous assessment or the building up of folios of work to be assessed at the end of the course (93% and 88%), although slightly more than half (59%) felt that examinations at the end of courses also helped them make progress. It cannot be assumed that adults will invariably shy away from exam courses; they perceive value in examinations even if they do not enjoy them. Indeed, our previous research suggested that an examination was seen to enhance the final qualification to the extent that SCOTVEC qualifications were felt to be 'worth less' than Standard Grades or Highers partly for this reason. Only 45% of adults appreciated tests every week with the same percentage favouring self-assessment. Again, adults do not want to be assessed too often, but they appear to want to be assessed by experts.

■ Guidance

We have seen that providers can ensure certain facilities and experiences are available to adults to enhance their participation. Another way in which providers can seek to support adult students is through the provision of formal guidance services. We wished to discover how far adults appreciated these services and how often they reported using them. We hypothesised that adults would make greater use of informal networks such as friends and family than the schools' formal services, but wondered whether this would be the case for all the different kinds of difficulties adults could experience in their studies. We therefore asked the respondents to tell us what sorts of problems had resulted from participation and the sorts of help or advice they had sought in relation to them. We were interested in both formal and informal guidance in three potential problem areas: academic work; respondents' personal lives; and finance.

The vast majority of respondents (over 80% in all three cases) reported that they had not had any problems in these areas – and therefore had not sought guidance. We felt this was an extremely high proportion, particularly as we know adult students have so many concerns and demands on their lives. We are not in a position to dispute the figure of course, but wonder how many adults felt unable to tell us, even in the anonymity of a questionnaire, that they had had difficulties with their studies.

Many of those who *did* report personal or financial difficulties reported that they had sought no guidance whatsoever, preferring to solve their problems on their own. Just over half of those who had had personal problems which interfered with their courses (27 out of 41 individuals) sought help: of these most went to the course teachers, and a quarter also talked to friends and/or relatives. Few confided in school guidance staff or other adult students at the school. Adults with financial problems were equally unlikely to seek help (although only 15 adults in the sample admitted to having such difficulties). Half of these spoke to their teachers or to relatives whilst only two spoke to school guidance staff or other adult students. This corresponds with the school data reported in Chapter 4 which indicated that adults were unlikely to seek help on financial problems.

The case was different for those who reported having academic difficulties such as difficulty with examination preparation, getting behind in lessons or understanding course content. All of the adults who reported having had such problems sought help – and they all sought help from their class teachers. In addition, other adults in the school were important sources of advice and support.

Clearly, then, the most important sources of help for adults are their class teachers, friends and relatives, and other adults in the school – but even these were consulted by the minority of adults. This seeming lack of reliance on formal and informal guidance is reflected in the self-reliance expressed by many adults elsewhere in the questionnaire. Eighty-three per cent reported they had not had any problems they needed to discuss and half (49%) said they preferred to solve their own problems without relying on others. The majority did not feel they needed their friends' support to do courses, although half (51%) said they could not continue their studies without the support of their family. Over 80% of respondents believed that, in any case, they had the support of their friends and families while doing school courses. Eighty-seven per cent reported that the adult students in the school also supported one another. This emphasis on self-reliance is interesting. A similar emphasis is evident in adult students' experience of higher education (see e.g., Munn *et al*, 1994) and often associated with the culture of students' responsibility for their own progress in HE. Perhaps this explanation is flawed and self-reliance is a characteristic of the adult learner. Schools, after all, have extensive guidance provision for pupils and could be argued to have a strong orientation towards pupil welfare.

Despite the fact they may not have used the schools' guidance services, adults appeared to appreciate knowing they were there. The vast majority of adults felt that school staff were both sympathetic to their needs and knowledgeable about how to deal with problems, as the following table shows.

Teachers here are too busy to deal with adults' problems	89% disagreed
Teachers do not seem to have much information to help me plan my future	80% disagreed
I don't think staff here understand the kind of help I need	88% disagreed
I think help should be easier to find at the school	66% disagreed
The guidance staff here are happy to deal with adults' problems	82% agreed

A small minority of respondents (8%) reported that they did not know where they could go for help if problems arose. This is not a large number, and indicates that for the most part, school guidance services are visible to potential users. But should any adult be ignorant of the support available? A range of research suggests the benefits of guidance services being proactive and seeking out clients as well as responding to the issues presented to them. This is doubly important if, as we suspect, adults are reluctant to come forward and admit they are having difficulties in the first instance.

■ Motivation from within

Finally, a word must be said about what is arguably the most important factor in ensuring successful participation – personal motivation. It can overcome most of the obstacles that are placed in the path to participation and can encourage adults to continue their courses even in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds. It appears to come from maturity, experience, and a new recognition of the benefits education can afford:

When I left school at 16, I was quite immature. I returned to school as an adult learner and had a totally different approach. I was eager and much more willing to learn than I had been 12 years earlier.

Providers, seemingly, can do little to encourage such motivation though they might be able to dent it badly. The data above suggest that schools ensure that they do everything they can to nurture adult returners' optimism and enthusiasm.

■ Summary

Fitting school in

Adults had a wide range of commitments they needed to juggle with their studies. For our sample, the most common external concern was caring for family. A significant group, however, believed that their schooling was the primary commitment in their lives – although many of these individuals were retired and pursuing courses for pleasure, others were seeking job qualifications and saw time in school as a valuable investment in the future. Most respondents believed that school organisation and timetables enabled them to accommodate their studies satisfactorily and few reported that hidden costs were a problem. We wonder, however, how many non-participants fail to return because they believe it would be impossible to 'fit school in' to their busy lives.

Becoming a student

The majority of adults agreed about the features that constitute a 'good' school: accessible, modern equipment; facilities such as common rooms for adults only; friendly teachers; a relaxed atmosphere; and a supportive learning culture. Lessons in which adults and younger pupils were taught together were favoured by more people than lessons which catered for adults alone. In lessons, adults appreciated a wide variety of teaching methods, with the most popular being teacher lecture with the chance to discuss and ask questions. Continuous assessment was favoured by the largest group of adults, but examinations were felt to be useful by the majority, too. Adult students are not a homogenous group and will not necessarily all welcome the same kinds of teaching methods.

Guidance

The vast majority of respondents claimed to have had no problems which interfered with their courses – and had therefore sought no help from schools' guidance services. Those who did need advice tended to approach their classroom teachers or their own friends and relatives and not formal guidance teachers. Nonetheless, most adults believed that they knew where to get help if they required it, although a minority did not know what guidance was available in the school. There are benefits in guidance services being proactive in their dealings with adult students, who may be unwilling to admit difficulties with their participation.

7 Gains and progression

What gains do adults feel they make through returning to school? What do they plan to do after their courses are finished? What sorts of help do they receive when making their choices about the future? Adults report that they accrue a wide variety of benefits from participation. We know from our qualitative study that adults often make unexpected gains during their courses, and that these gains often result in the acquiring of new goals. An individual may return to school hoping that a qualification in Standard Grade English will lead to a job, for example. Enjoyment of the course and the satisfaction that results from an examination pass may well lead that individual not back into the labour market, but to Higher English in school or at college, or even to an Access course. This was one of the most common results of unanticipated gains: the desire to progress 'onwards and upwards' to the next stage of education. Such changes in plan could also lead to confusion, however, as adults were uncertain of the use to which they could put their new interests and qualifications. Often, they were unclear about the progression routes most suitable for them. Guidance was of key importance to these students in helping them to make sense of their new situation and formulate their plans.

We were interested in the opinions of adults in schools on these issues. We asked respondents in the questionnaire sample to tell us what they felt they had gained from their return to education and what they planned to do at the end of their courses. We also wished to discover the sorts of help adults had sought when making decisions about their future and the degree of satisfaction with which they viewed the guidance they had received.

■ Gains

What gains did adults make from returning to school? We presented respondents with a list of 13 possible gains and asked them to tick as many as they felt applied to them. The list was derived from our earlier research and contained both 'hard' items such as qualifications and employment and 'soft' items such as new skills and confidence. Only six people listed just one gain - and 16 listed more than ten! Most adults ticked between four and eight gains.

It will be heartening for teachers that so many adults had obviously enjoyed their courses and found them to be worthwhile. By far the most common reported gains were the ones that are traditionally difficult to measure and quantify: enjoyment; new friends; confidence and the like. Clearly, satisfaction can appear in many guises - and it is not only the gaining of qualifications or jobs that are important outcomes of the education process. All of the gains reported by the sample appear in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1 Respondents' reported gains

	% of respondents (n = 396)
enjoyment	91
knowledge	79
new skills	72
friends	64
confidence	62
new interests	57
qualifications	54
desire to progress	53
awareness of potential	28
place on course	16
learned how to learn	11
help kids with homework	8
job	4

We were struck by the almost evangelical tone many respondents adopted when writing about their experience in school:

Returning to education has increased my self-confidence, returned my own personality with a greater self-confidence and rekindled the ambitions I had before having children. It has taught me, not only academically, but socially. I have never been more aware of the problems faced by school leavers, or of how a domestic/social background can affect one's attitude to education and beyond.

I came back to school to learn Spanish, fill in afternoons, and relax from my busy job for a few hours. I got much more, a feeling of self-worth, just being able to study again, being part of a team, having fun, laughing at each other's mistakes and helping each other. Gracias!

[I] have fulfilled a dream at the age of 69.

How can schools quantify or put a price on such achievement? We were struck by the numbers of people who, having disliked school as children, were now embracing it as a life-enhancing experience. Quite apart from the obvious benefits this brings to individuals, it can only help schools' image in the community as well. Schools which have a high profile in their area and which offer adults satisfying and rewarding opportunities will gain from increased support from parents and community groups – and even, perhaps, younger pupils.

If adults reported wide-ranging benefits from participation, how far had they achieved their initial goals? Were adults accomplishing in school what they had set out to do? The following table indicates the percentage of adults who, having identified each item as a goal, reported its achievement.

Initial goal	Gains
for interest/enjoyment	95% have enjoyed it
to gain new skills for personal satisfaction	87% have gained new skills
to gain qualifications for personal satisfaction	73% have gained qualifications
to gain qualifications for a better job	83% have gained qualifications
	9% have gained a job
to gain new skills for a better job	89% have gained new skills
	8% have gained a job
to gain qualifications for another course	67% have gained qualifications
to help children with their homework	44% are better able to help

Clearly, though most adults were realising their goals, many still had a fair way to go in achieving their objectives. Less than 10% who had returned in the hope of securing a [better] job had done so when we contacted them. Of course, the adults had not yet finished their courses, and it is possible that they were waiting to do so before they went job-hunting. Another, perhaps more likely, explanation is that these individuals, having gained qualifications, were simply unable to find work. How far can school qualifications facilitate entry into the labour market for individuals living in areas of real disadvantage and with structural unemployment? Is it realistic for these individuals to suppose that such qualifications are the passports to jobs? Perhaps one reason for adults' choosing to progress in education rather than enter employment is their inability to find work and the hope that by gaining further qualifications, opportunities in the labour market will be increased.

Certainly, it is the case in this sample that many more were hoping to progress to the next stage of education than had stated this as an initial purpose for return. Although 25% of the sample had returned for the purpose of gaining qualifications for progression, 85% reported that the desire to progress to the next stage of education was an outcome of their current course! Forty-two per cent had already gained a place on a new course. We are not suggesting that all of these adults had negative, reactive reasons for progression. The desire to continue with courses is just as likely to result from higher aspirations arising from increased confidence; changing career plans arising from new interests; and new interests arising from the enjoyment of participation. Guidance services should be alert, however, to adults' reasons for wanting to progress and will be sensitive about raising expectations for work in areas where unemployment is high. Such services will also be thoughtful about adults' motivation for wanting to continue their education: is the wish borne of positive gains or is it avoidance-related? Again, it is possible that adults are done no favours when they are encouraged to accumulate qualifications which will not increase their employment chances – if this is their only purpose for return.

■ Progression

What were adults' plans for the future? We asked respondents what they thought they might like to do at the end of their courses. Thirty-one per cent had not yet decided what they wanted to do, but almost half of the remaining adults (47%) were determined to continue doing similar courses at school.

Table 7.2 Respondents' future plans

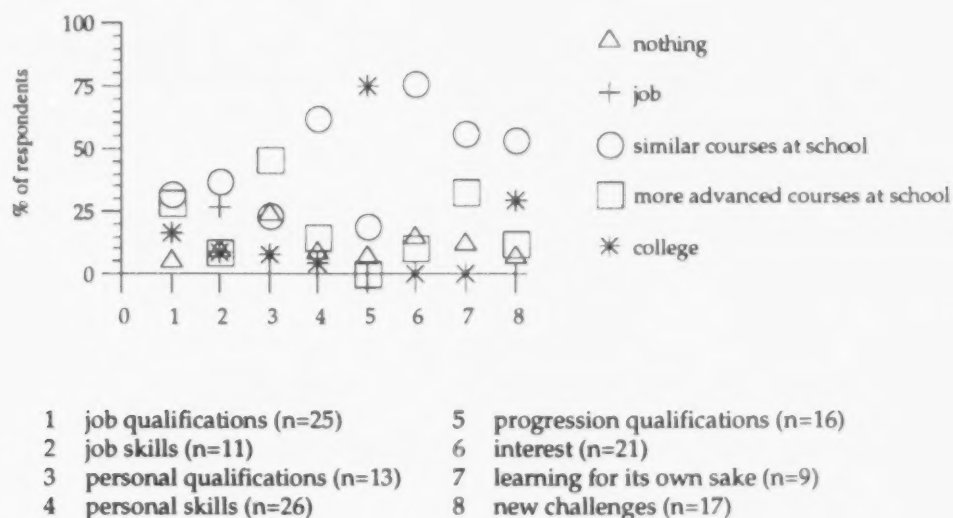
	% of respondents (n = 285)
do more courses of a similar kind	47
go to college	18
do more advanced courses at school	17
nothing more for the time being	7
get a job	5
don't know	3

Of those 19 adults who had decided not to do any more courses for the time being, 14 reported that they were too busy with their families or jobs to find the time.

Two adults had lost interest in their studies, but three adults were not going to continue because they did not know what further courses were available to them. Three adults is not a significant number – but we felt that no adults should be in such a position when so many varied progression opportunities are available.

How far were respondents' current plans congruent with their original purposes for return? We examined the data for those adults who had come to school with one particular purpose, and compared this purpose with their new plans.

Figure 7.1 Respondents' initial goals and current plans (n=138)



As we have already suggested, the plans of those who had initially returned in the hopes of gaining a better job had changed dramatically: most of these adults were now seeking to progress either sideways through the system (by pursuing more courses of a similar kind at school) or onwards and upwards (by pursuing more advanced courses at school or college). Interestingly, many of those who had initially participated with the intention of gaining qualifications for progression did not plan on moving on at the end of their current course, but were instead intent on pursuing similar courses at school. Is this because they failed to gain their required qualifications – or were their qualifications inappropriate for their chosen progression destination? Perhaps they were not feeling confident enough to leave the school and begin again in a different setting. Perhaps they were enjoying school so much that they simply preferred to stay. We have no way of knowing for certain why these adults' plans changed – but their non-progression should not automatically be considered a negative outcome of participation. Too often, schools view as 'successful' those adults who adopt the progression patterns of achieving pupils, as this adult obviously has:

Thanks to adult education and the teachers I've been involved with, perhaps I may realise my ambition to go to university and do a degree course.

([Signed] A Grateful Student)

But is this adult's progression any more meaningful than another two individuals who wrote:

It's great to get the chance to further my education like this. I wouldn't consider a year without doing something at school – even just two days a week ... I've been doing it for six years and hope to continue.

I have found going back to school a challenge which I enjoy. It makes me feel good at the end of each module that I have achieved something. The courses are more enjoyable than when I was at school and I shall be glad to come back next year.

Progression, as we have written before, is in the eye of the beholder. Guidance services must be sensitive to this, and audits which measure only concrete achievements such as qualifications gained and next progression destinations simplify and distort the picture whilst at the same time depreciating adults' achievement and experience in school.

■ Guidance for progression

If adults' goals change as a result of the gains they make, how do they go about taking account of this? Whom do adults consult when making decisions about their future? In the questionnaire, we asked adults to tell us whether or not they felt they had enough information to make such decision; what other sorts of information they felt they needed, if any; whether they had consulted anyone about the options open to them; and whom they had consulted.

The majority of adults (65%) felt they had enough information to make a decision about what they would do at the end of their course. This is not to say that they had consulted anyone about their plans, however: 76% of those who felt they had enough information (195 adults) had not sought any advice about the options open to them. We were delighted that so many adults felt so confident and self-reliant, but wondered how wide their knowledge base was about the alternatives open to them.

Most (70%) of the 98 adults who felt they did not have sufficient information had not sought guidance either. Was this because they did not know where to go for help? We stress again the importance that school guidance services be proactive in offering advice and support to individuals who, for one reason or another, are reluctant to seek them out.

In total, then, 152 adults (or 38% of the sample) had sought some sort of guidance about their futures. When we asked respondents to tell us where they had looked for this advice, most reported that they had talked to their teachers about what they could do. Table 7.3 indicates the sources of help adults had found: respondents could tick as many items as they liked.

The vast majority of adults who consulted each of these sources of information (over 80% in most cases) felt they had sufficient information to plan their futures: there were few significant differences between these sources of guidance and adults' satisfaction with them. In only two cases did less than 80% of adults report satisfaction: when they sent away for information (78% satisfied) and when they went to the Job Centre (64% satisfied). Clearly, the most effective guidance was felt to be obtained at a personal level, from people familiar with adults' personal situation and circumstances.

Table 7.3 Sources of guidance for progression

	% of adults (n = 152)
teachers at school	84
adult students at school	48
partner	39
friends	29
sent away (to other providers) for information	21
guidance staff at school	19
Job Centre	7
staff at future provider	6
school computer database	2

What information did adults still require? Seventy-four adults specified the kinds of information they would have liked to have had: the two most common of these were the availability of other courses (51%) and careers advice (18%). Other information, specified by only a few adults, included advice about adults' own capabilities; advice about necessary qualifications for adults' chosen career; advice about possible progression routes; individualised advice about courses appropriate for adults' own purposes; and advice about benefits and finance.

Nine per cent of the 74 reported that they were so confused they didn't know what sort of advice would have been helpful. We felt this group, though small, was particularly worrying – and one of whose existence teachers and guidance services should be aware. None of these adults had sought advice of any kind but were clearly in need of some sort of guidance. Should any student be so bereft of advice? Again, we highlighted the need for a proactive approach in seeking out such adults and offering help where possible.

■ Summary

Gains

Adults reported that they had made a wide variety of gains from their participation. The most common gains were enjoyment and the acquiring of new skills and knowledge. Many of these gains were unanticipated. Fewer adults with instrumental goals than personal goals had achieved their aims, but the plans of many with instrumental goals were changing as a result of the gains they had made. Far greater numbers were hoping to progress to the next stage of education than had been intending initially.

Progression

Most respondents hoped to continue pursuing courses in school, including individuals who had initially participated for employment or progression reasons. We did not feel this was necessarily a negative finding. Progression often means movement sideways through the system, as well as onwards and upwards, and the measuring of 'success' by qualifications gained or next destinations simplifies the achievement adults make in school.

Guidance for progression

Although adults seemed confident about the choices they were making concerning their futures, few had employed formal guidance services when making their

decisions. Most of those who had sought out guidance were content to speak to their class teachers: guidance was felt to be most effective when offered at a personal, individualised level. Adults who still felt in need of information specified that they would like to know more about the availability of other suitable courses and advice about possible careers. A few adults were confused and bewildered by the choices they needed to make and did not know where to go for help: this suggests the need for a proactive approach to providing information, advice and support.

8 Policy implications

Secondary schools in Scotland are key providers of educational opportunities for adults. This study is the first survey of providers' and participants' views about the provision schools are able to offer. In seeking the views of staff and adult students in over 70 schools we were able to construct a general picture of the state of adult education in schools across the country.

The study had three main foci:

- *Participation.* From schools, we sought to discover the methods by which they sought to attract adults and their reasons for encouraging adults to return; the advantages and disadvantages they associated with adult students; and the issues surrounding teaching and learning that arose from adults' presence in the classroom. From adults, we hoped to uncover their reasons for returning to education; their reasons for choosing particular schools over other providers; and the benefits and disadvantages of their providers, including views about teaching and learning in the classroom.
- *Guidance.* We asked school staff about guidance for adults during their induction, during their studies and when they were making their future plans. In addition, we asked about the facilities schools offered their adult students and the sorts of monitoring and evaluation they carried out. We asked adults what sorts of help and support they appreciated at all stages of their return and from whom they sought any help they required.
- *Progression.* School staff were questioned about the links that had been developed to enable adult students' progression onwards and upwards in education or into the labour market. Possible links included those with further and higher education institutions and with employers. Adults were asked about the gains they felt they had made through participation in school classes and their plans for the future.

This final chapter summarises our main findings and considers the policy implications arising from them. These are derived directly from the data. The same sets of findings, however, may be examined from different perspectives. Policy-makers at a regional level, working in a locality where adults have been attending school classes for many years will have different concerns from, for example, headteachers contemplating opening the school gates to adults for the first time. Although we hope that our findings will have equal relevance for both types of readers, we are conscious that their interests will not always be the same. Our discussion of the implications of each of the three main areas of research has additional subdivisions, therefore, determined by their degree of relevance either to policy makers or those working at school level.

■ Participation

Adults participated for a wide variety of reasons: often, it was impossible for an individual to identify one goal as more important than any others. Even adults with broadly similar goals enrolled in dissimilar courses in order to achieve them. Adults who returned to school also varied in age; employment status and educational background. These conditions, too, provided few clues as to the provision adults were likely to choose. Only the broadest generalisations could be made about the adults in our sample, as we saw in Chapter 5. Although the largest groups were either young women at home looking after families or older adults who had retired from work, for example, the sample also included four men who were employed full-time. Although most older adults were pursuing personal goals, this was not always the case. Individuals with personal reasons for participation were quite likely to choose certificated 'academic' subjects as a way of realising their goals. We concluded from these data that there is no single way of encouraging adults to return to school.

Many schools, however, targeted certain groups in the hopes of attracting them back. Women with pre-school children and older returners were the most common such groups. As these were the most common groups to be found in schools, this strategy appears to be a great success. Fewer schools targeted unemployed men or people from minority ethnic groups.

Issues for policy makers

- Schools are successful in attracting back into education previously disenfranchised groups. Authorities that have made this a priority could consider ways in which schools can contribute to regional strategies for community development. In essence, they could ask if schools are an under-utilised resource in this context.
- Funding which makes judgements about 'vocational' or 'non-vocational' courses is unhelpful. Adults return to the same courses for different reasons. This implies that distinctions between certificated and uncertificated courses when resources are being allocated are unfair.
- HMI (1992b) have already commented upon the desirability of certificated 'leisure' courses and we reiterate that possibility here.

Issues for schools

- As wide a range of subjects and course types as possible should be made available to adults, as it is impossible to predict which courses will appeal to which learners.
- Schools might find it helpful to review their adult student intake and ask if there are any additional groups they wish to target. The evidence suggests that most schools fail to attract younger men and schools might like to consider ways in which such students might be encouraged to return. Links with other agencies such as the Community Education Service would be a useful starting point for schools eager to follow this route.

Most schools reported that they relied upon word of mouth to attract potential adult students, although local advertising and liaising with outside agencies

such as the Community Education Service were also common strategies. We saw in Chapter 2 how adults' reasons for coming to school reflected this: the single most common way in which adults heard about their school's provision was through friends and relatives. A great strength of schools as providers of adult education provision was their high profile in their local communities. We know that the identification of a suitable education provider on the doorstep is often sufficient to attract adults – even in preference to other providers. Schools can capitalise on their role in the community by ensuring that their profile is a prominent one.

Issues for policy makers

- Education authorities can provide a clear lead in relation to the importance of schools' role in the wider community by stressing in policy statements the importance of collaboration with other groups and providers.

Issues for schools

- Schools seeking to attract adults could saturate their local communities with straightforward information about their existence and the provision they offer.
- Consideration might be given to whether or not schools are able to allocate more resources to outreach work, where individuals go out to the community and stress that their school offers educational opportunities for adults of all ages and stages.

School staff felt that the many benefits adults brought to school greatly outweighed any potential disadvantages. These were reported fully in Chapter 3. Adults were seen to have positive effects on younger pupils by acting as effective role models – and providing a mature, stabilising influence. Teachers enjoyed teaching adults and having them in their classroom. Adult students brought additional resources to schools. They also served as a useful link between school and community.

Although adults were seen to have different characteristics from younger pupils, these were not felt to necessitate the use of different teaching methods or a new curriculum. Indeed, adults' presence was deemed to have had little effect on the teaching and learning going on in schools. At the same time, adults were felt to make demands on teachers for which they had not been trained, and most respondents believed some training in teaching adults would be useful for school staff.

Issues for policy makers

- In regions where schools do not generally cater for adults, policy-makers could consider the benefits adult participation can bring to schools as well as the wider community. This seems to be particularly the case in rural areas where other forms of provision for adults can be difficult and expensive. Resourcing of schools' provision should take these wider benefits into account.
- The teaching of adults would be a useful focus for in-service training of classroom teachers, particularly where adults are taught alongside younger pupils in examination classes.

Issues for schools

- Although most teachers enjoy teaching adults, some do not. Schools might like to consider how they allocate teachers to adult classrooms and the support they are able to provide for teachers teaching adults for the first time.
- Teachers could be encouraged to reflect on their classroom practice where adults are present. How do teachers view adult learners in relation to their younger counterparts? How well are the needs of *all* students taken into account? Are the teaching methods used relevant to the characteristics of both younger and older learners? There would be benefit in teachers sharing their experiences in these matters.

■ Guidance

We have seen that most adults relied upon informal contacts when choosing to return to school and that schools themselves tended to capitalise on word of mouth as a means of encouraging adults through the door. At the early stages of return, such informality continued to be important. Most schools provided some sort of induction programme for their new adult students but these varied widely in form and content. Most included introductions to key people, provision of literature about the school, and tours of the school. A third of the school sample reported that they did not have the time or money to develop such a programme. This issue was explored more fully in Chapter 2. Adults, too, opted for an informal approach to their school, 'dropping in' to talk about courses before classes began. One-third reported that they had had an interview. Eleven percent reported that they had no contact before classes started. We can only speculate as to the reasons behind this latter finding, but point to the importance of clear communication between provider and student at the early stages of return.

Issues for schools

- The nature and content of schools' induction procedures might benefit from careful review. Are adult returners given the informal support they require? Are adults offered the opportunity of an interview? An investment in time and effort at the early stages of adults' return can be important in ensuring successful initial and subsequent participation.

Most schools had a member of staff with responsibility for adult guidance, though this was a sole remit in very few cases. Most schools reported that subject staff were adults' key source of guidance. Training in adult guidance was felt to be needed, but few schools had staff with such training. As we discussed in Chapter 4, school staff believed adults' most common guidance needs were advice on further study; advice on careers; and advice on study skills. Few staff reported that adults sought financial advice from schools.

Adults themselves reflected most of these points, although most reported that they had had no problems requiring them to seek guidance. Of those with academic problems, the most common source of guidance was, not surprisingly, the classroom teacher. Most of those with personal or financial problems chose to solve them on their own or with the help of friends and relatives: of those who did seek guidance from school staff, classroom teachers were again the most common

source of guidance. In Chapter 6, we wondered about the visibility of schools' guidance services and the use that might be made of them if they were more proactive in seeking out adults' problems: 34% of adults agree that 'help should be easier to find at the school'.

Issues for policy makers

- A range of research suggests the benefits of guidance services and agencies being co-ordinated at a national and regional level. Some regions are already adopting this approach and a start at national level has been made through AEGIS. What counts as quality guidance and how will quality be assessed?
- Few school staff had specialised training in adult guidance. Could regions commission special courses which would be appropriate for staff in different sectors? Should SOED encourage more school staff to acquire qualifications in adult guidance?

Issues for schools

- Adults' main sources of guidance in their schools are their classroom teachers. The implications of this both for teachers and guidance staff are important. Are the appropriate people giving advice to students? Are they informed about the help available to adults? Are guidance staff visible and accessible to adults?
- Consideration might be given to schools' mechanisms for on-going guidance. Are guidance services as proactive as possible in identifying potential guidance issues?
- If schools are aware of and tap into external sources of guidance wherever possible, this can be an economical way of providing effective support.

The provision of suitable facilities was a key determinant in attracting adults back to school and in ensuring their successful participation. Key among these was the provision of free childcare on demand: for most young women with children, the provision of a crèche made it possible for them to return at all. Other useful facilities provided by schools and appreciated by adults were common rooms and quiet study areas. Perhaps the most important facility schools could offer their adult students was free course provision. These were discussed in Chapters 4 and 6.

Issues for policy makers

- Resourcing is a central issue for regions trying to encourage adults back into schools. It is important that allocation of funds is commensurate with the staffing and facilities required to provide for adults. Could sources such as the European Social Fund be used more effectively for this purpose?
- Facilities towards which resources could usefully be targeted are (in the first instance) free course provision and a free, accessible crèche in each school.

Issues for schools

- Resource priorities are free courses and crèche provision. Adults-only lessons need not be a high priority for schools, although adults-only common rooms or study areas are important. How will devolved management of budgets affect resource provision and allocation?

We reported in Chapter 4 that most schools monitored adult students' progress to some extent. This generally took the form of an 'informal arrangement' with subject teachers and/or students. Most monitoring involved the collection of quantitative data such as completion rates. Although some schools had well thought-out mechanisms for recording more qualitative student feedback, most schools did not actively seek information either about students' success or about their satisfaction with courses. Fourteen respondents said that although monitoring data were collected, no use of it was made by staff.

Issues for policy makers

- If local authorities use schools' own monitoring data when determining resource allocations, they should ensure that 'soft' data concerning students' satisfaction is considered alongside, and given the same credence as, 'hard' data such as completion rates and examination results.

Issues for schools

- Schools could consider the ways in which they monitor students' progress. What sorts of data are collected? Who collects it? Who is responsible for ensuring it is used correctly? Unless mechanisms are in place to collect such information, valuable time and effort can be wasted later on.
- To what uses is monitoring data put? Systematic feedback can help identify potential non-completers early on and identify successful courses for the purpose of planning future provision.

■ Progression

Adults reported that they made many gains from their return to school. Chief among these were enjoyment, increased knowledge, and new skills. These gains are difficult for providers to measure and quantify. Fewer adults reported measurable gains such as a place on a new course or a job. Yet who is to say which achievements are more important to adult returners? We argued in Chapter 7 that schools must not be too eager to apply measures of younger students' 'success' (in terms of places on university or college courses; or jobs) to more mature learners.

Gains such as increased confidence and new interests lead many adults to change their future plans. Most of those whose original purpose had been to gain qualifications or skills for a better job were either seeking to do further courses at school or progress to the next stage of education. Yet these new plans often caused confusion to adults, who either did not know to what use they could put their new skills, or were unclear about the options their new qualifications opened up.

Issues for policy makers

- The personal and social benefits of participation should be recognised alongside potential employment benefits.

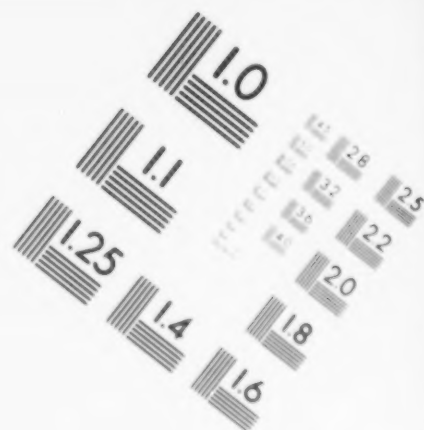
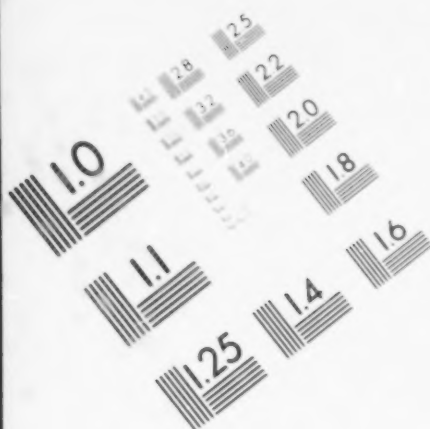


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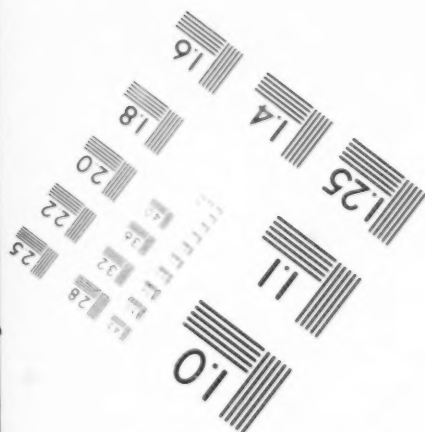
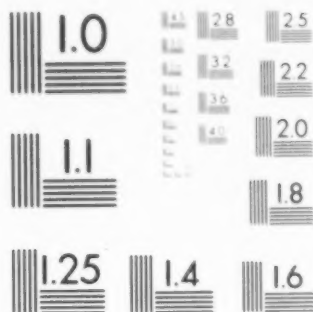
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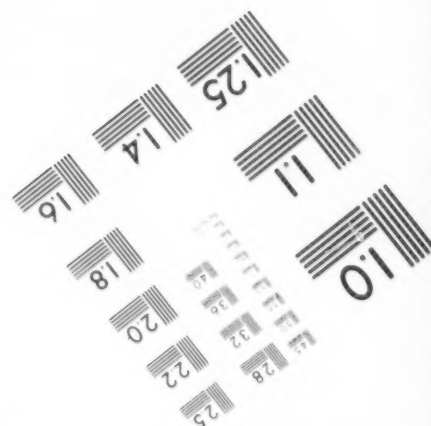
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Issues for schools

- Schools need to be alert to adults' changing goals and the ways in which these can affect future plans. Are guidance services aware of adults' reasons for wanting to progress? Are guidance workers sensitive about raising expectations for employment where jobs are difficult to find?
- Schools might benefit from making every effort to liaise with careers services for the purpose of advising adults on employment opportunities.
- The aims of adult students and schools may conflict, where adults seek to progress to other providers but schools are eager to keep numbers high. Schools can ask themselves whether they are truly offering adult students impartial advice when advising them on possible progression opportunities.

Links between schools and other educational providers were outlined in Chapter 4. These links were often described by school staff as 'informal'. Very few of these were in any way systematic or organised to facilitate the progression of students. In some cases, schools saw themselves in competition with 'rival' educational services and actively strove to isolate themselves from other potential providers of opportunities for adult students. Very few schools had links with employers or adults' careers officers.

Issues for policy makers

- Local authorities can offer a clear lead in the constructing of effective collaborative arrangements between institutions and agencies: between schools and the Community Education Service, for example, or schools and colleges.
- The possibility of constructing new central links between employers and adults in school could be investigated, involving in particular Local Enterprise Companies and, perhaps, initiatives such as Compact and work experience.

Issues for schools

- Schools could evaluate their links with other providers of educational opportunities. With which other providers are they in regular contact? Are adult students made aware of possible progression opportunities outwith the school? How far do schools encourage their adults to proceed onwards and upwards to other educational settings?
- If schools do not have such links, they might ask themselves why this is the case. Is it merely a case of poor communication or is there a conscious desire for isolation? Collaboration with other providers can often benefit schools, in terms of sharing of resources and expertise.
- Schools could consider whether there are any ways in which adults can possibly be accommodated by the links forged with employers for the benefit of younger pupils.
- Schools might ask whether they are making all possible use of adult guidance specialists in the careers service and investigate the possibility of other sources of guidance for progression.

We began this report by emphasising that Scotland is unique in Europe in the degree to which it promotes provision for adults within the secondary school system. Much has been accomplished in the relatively short time in which schools have opened their doors and the testimony of adult students about the benefits of returning to school provides convincing evidence of the personal and social gains from participation. Schools are going through a period of multiple innovations and will shortly be experiencing a change in education authority relationships through devolved management of budgets and through the reorganisation of local authorities into single tier units. The new authorities will have no statutory obligation to create an Education Committee and where there is no Education Committee there is no statutory obligation to create the post of Director of Education. In addition, the careers service is no longer to be the responsibility of local authorities.

All these changes pose considerable challenges for schools in their responsibilities of educating young people of compulsory school age. It would be a pity if the good work done in providing for adults were to be overlooked or neglected in these circumstances. For while much remains to be done in this area, much has already been achieved due to the hard work and dedication of those involved. Schools carry out an important function by offering adults a second chance to gain academic qualifications and skills: indeed, in so doing, schools fulfil the needs of a substantial number of returners. Having risen to this challenge so successfully, schools might look ahead to adults' other needs and the possibilities offered by networking with other services. Such networking would enhance adults' progression opportunities and allow schools to take an as yet unrealised role in community development.

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Appendix A: Technical appendix

■ Sampling

The methodology called for a sample of 80 secondary schools catering for adults throughout Scotland, representing 20% of schools in the country. It was stipulated that each of the schools was required to have 20 or more adults on the roll for inclusion in the survey. As a starting point to choosing the sample, each region was contacted for the purpose of collecting its data on the numbers of adults in schools. Many regions, however, did not hold this information centrally and it proved impossible to draw our sample in this way.

We therefore turned to the Scottish Office Education Department Statistics Division, who were able to provide us with provisional data on adults from the September 1992 school census. For the purpose of the census, an adult is defined as a student on the school roll who has resumed school education and is aged 19 or over (the census measures age at 31 December). From this list, we determined which institutions had more than 20 adults on the roll and drew a random sample of 80 schools. See Appendix B for full details of the sample schools, together with a comparison with national statistics.

■ The methodology

Our initial contact with each of the schools was for three purposes:

- to ask whether the school was willing to take part in the survey
- to identify the person with responsibility for adult education in the school, who became our contact in the school
- to arrange access to ten adult students (we specified that for our purposes an 'adult' was someone who had taken at least a two year break from initial school education)

Data collection had two elements:

- each contact was interviewed over the telephone
- each of the ten identified adults in each school was asked to complete a questionnaire

Each of these two elements is described more fully, below.

Telephone interviews with staff

Of the original 80 schools, 72 took part in the telephone survey. Interviews were conducted in April, May and June 1992. Each interview lasted roughly 45 minutes, though a few were shorter and one took two hours.

Interviewers followed a schedule which used a variety of question types. Some closed questions offered respondents a list of predetermined replies with the opportunity to add additional information if they wished. These lists were derived from pilot interviews with staff, our previous qualitative work and the

literature. The purpose of these lists was to gather straightforward information about resources and facilities and test hypotheses we had generated earlier about the views of school staff regarding adults. Other open questions allowed interviewees more freedom of response. These questions were used where we were seeking more impressionistic data. Thus, we hoped to ensure that respondents covered areas of common ground quickly and efficiently, but at the same time allow the opportunity to discuss at greater length individual differences and points of view.

Interview questions centred upon the following topics:

- methods of attracting students, including marketing and targeting methods
- schools' reasons for encouraging adults to return
- respondents' views on the advantages and disadvantages of having adults in school
- the nature of the provision currently offered
- teaching and learning, including respondents' views on the differences between adult learners and younger students; the changes that the presence of adults may have wrought in teaching styles and in the curriculum; and the degree to which subject specialists are perceived to need training in order to respond to these changes
- support and guidance, including the identification of staff with training or expertise in adult guidance; the types of guidance most frequently sought by adults; and the facilities schools have made available for their adult students
- student placement, monitoring and evaluation
- progression onwards from school including the links between schools and other educational providers and the links between schools and employers.

The adult student questionnaire

Our contacts were asked to distribute questionnaires to ten adult students at random, during the course of one morning in school. Five of the schools declined at the outset to distribute the questionnaire. In addition, the timing of the survey coincided with external examinations and an additional ten schools subsequently failed to identify any adult students. The resulting 65 schools distributed questionnaires in late April or early May, 1993. Of the 650 students who were thus invited to participate, 396 returned their questionnaires either to their schools or to SCRE, representing a response rate of 61%. See Appendix C for full details of the adult student sample.

The questionnaire also made use of a range of different questioning techniques, although open questions were kept to a minimum in order that respondents would be required to do as little writing as possible. As our previous qualitative exploration of adults' views had revealed problems with the survey approach however, we endeavoured to construct a questionnaire which would avoid some of the pitfalls of excessive generalisation. See Chapter 5 for a complete discussion of the ways in which we attempted to do this.

The questionnaire covered the following areas:

- demographic details, such as age, gender, family responsibilities, employment situation and education history
- adults' experiences of participation, including the benefits and disadvantages of the chosen provider and provision and views on teaching methods
- respondents' reasons for returning to education, the gains they felt they made and their plans for the future
- respondents' experience of support and guidance in the initial stages of participation, while studying, and in planning for the future.

■ Data analysis

The data from both the telephone interviews and the questionnaires was coded and analysed using SPSS-X. Throughout, statistical significance was determined using Chi-squared tests, with differences deemed significant at the 5% level. Information which respondents provided in answer to open questions was coded and analysed manually.

Appendix B: The sample of schools

■ Scottish schools with adult students

In 1992, 335 of 412 Scottish secondary schools made provision for adult students (*Statistics on Adults in Education*). Our sample of 72 schools thus includes approximately one-fifth of all Scottish schools attended by adults.

■ Location of the schools taking part in the survey

Our 72 schools were located in seven of the Scottish regions. The largest number were in Strathclyde, which is, nationally, the region with the largest number of schools taking adult students. We remind readers that we selected only schools with 20 or more adults on the roll: schools in regions such as Highland and Tayside tended to have less than this number, which is why these regions are not represented in the sample. Table B.1 below shows the regional distribution of the schools with adult provision.

Table B.1 Number of schools in Scotland with adult provision

	number of schools in our sample	number of schools with adults	total number of schools in region
Strathclyde	55	164	173
Lothian	7	36	48
Fife	3	19	19
Dumfries and Galloway	3	16	16
Grampian	2	23	38
Borders	1	6	9
Central	1	17	19
Highland	0	22	27
Tayside	0	25	32
Orkney	0	2	6
Shetland	0	3	9
Western Isles	0	2	16

We also calculated the number of schools serving areas of social and economic deprivation by identifying those schools where 30% or more of school-age pupils receive free school meals. By this reckoning, 13 of the schools in our sample were in areas of social and economic deprivation: 12 of these were in Strathclyde and one was in Lothian.

■ Adults in the sample schools

The 72 schools catered for 9,257 adult students in total, or 78% of the total number of adults in schools in Scotland (according to the provisional 1992 Census).

Women greatly outnumbered men, though not all of the schools in the sample were able to break down their student numbers according to sex. Table B.2 shows division of students by gender in the schools in the sample:

Table B.2 *Gender of adult students in sample schools*

	number of students (n = 9,257)
female	5,224
male	1,116
gender unknown	2,917

Women made up 82.4% of the students catered for in the schools in our sample (basing calculations on the number of students whose sex was recorded). This figure replicates the national statistic for 1992 recording 81% of all adult students in schools as women (provisional Census). See Appendix C for a breakdown of the gender and age of the adult respondents in our sample.

The vast majority of the adults attending the schools in our sample were participating part-time: there were only 88 full-time adults. However, in comparison with national statistics, the figure for full-timers was remarkably high: in 1990 there were only 38 adults attending school full-time in the country as a whole (Scottish Office Statistical Bulletin, Edn/K1/1992/2). We have no data relating to full-time students to explain this.

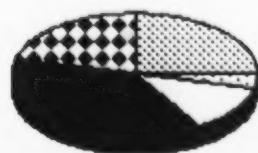
The number of adults per school varied widely across the sample. Though we had set a minimum limit of 20 adults as one of the conditions of participation in the survey, one school with 16 adult students slipped through the net. The largest school in the sample had 1,725 adults. The average number of students per school in the sample was 129, a figure considerably greater than the average of 35.4 recorded nationally for 1992 (provisional Census). A possible explanation for this discrepancy is the decision to limit our sample to schools with 20 or more adult students. It is also likely that the two schools in our sample with over 1,000 adults have distorted the figure: over half (42) of the schools in the sample had under 80 adults.

The number of school-age pupils attending the schools in our sample also varied considerably. The smallest school had 300 school-age pupils, and the largest 1,600. Half of the sample (36 schools) had under 800 school-age pupils. The ratio of adults to school-age pupils ranged from 5:2 to 1:89. However, it is important to bear in mind that almost all the adults were part-time students, and thus even where adults theoretically outnumbered school-age pupils, it is unlikely that the school-age pupils feel 'swamped'. Unfortunately the two schools in question were unable to give us data relating to the full-time equivalent of adults attending. Where we did have this data, the highest ratio of adults to pupils, based on full-time equivalent numbers, was 1:5.

Our sample schools appeared to demonstrate that smaller schools (in terms of the numbers of school-age pupils attending) were likely to provide for larger numbers of adults, while larger schools had relatively few adult students. Figure B.1, below, shows the percentages of adults in small (less than 630 school-age pupils), medium (between 630 and 949 school-age pupils) and large (950 or more) schools, showing a clear trend (with some exceptions) of inverse proportions of numbers of adults to numbers of school-age pupils.

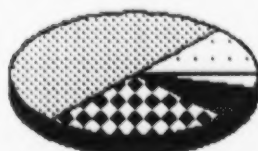
Figure B.1 *Proportions of adults to school-age pupils in small, medium and large schools*

Small schools (pupils < 630)
(n=24)



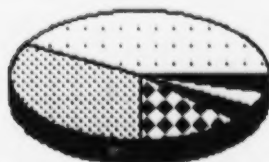
-  5% - 9%
-  10% - 19%
-  20% - 49%
-  50% - 100%
-  > 100%

Medium schools (pupils < 630 - 949)
(n=24)



-  < 5%
-  5% - 9%
-  10% - 19%
-  20% - 49%
-  50% - 100%

Large schools (pupils > 950)
(n=24)



-  < 5%
-  5% - 9%
-  10% - 19%
-  20% - 49%
-  50% - 100%

Appendix C: The sample of adult participants

Table C.1 *The ages and genders of the adult participants in the study sample*

	16-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56+	total %
% women	5	21	26	8	22	82
% men	2	2	3	1	10	18
total %	7	23	29	9	32	100

Our sample reflects the participation patterns of adults in schools across Scotland. The most recent available figures for 1992 (*Statistics on Adults in Education*) show that women constitute 81% of the population. The preponderance of older adults (particularly post-retirement men) in schools has also been documented (Bannister, 1990).

Table C.2 *% of men and women participating part-time and full-time in schools, further education and higher education in Scotland*

		% part-time	% full-time	total %
study sample (n=396)	% women	82	0	82
	% men	18	0	18
	total %	100	0	100
schools in Scotland (n=11,851)*	% women	unavail	unavail	81
	% men	unavail	unavail	19
	total %	99.7	0.3	100
colleges in Scotland (vocational training) (n=100,993)**	% women	44	7	51
	% men	42	7	49
	total %	86	14	100
higher education in Scotland (1st degree) (n=8427)*	% women	14	34	48
	% men	12	40	52
	total %	26	74	100

* derived from *Statistics on Adults in Education* (provisional 1992 figures)

** *Scottish Office Statistical Bulletin* (Edn/K1/1992/2).

Table C.3a Regional breakdown of adult participation in schools

	our sample % (n=396)	adults in Scottish schools % (n=11,851)
Borders	2	1
Central	2	1
Dumfries and Galloway	4	3
Fife	5	3
Grampian	2	2
Highland	0	1
Lothian	10	24
Tayside	0	1
Orkney	0	>1
Shetland	0	>1
Western Isles	0	>1
Strathclyde	75	63

Table C.3b Adults in Strathclyde schools

	our sample % (n=292)	adults in Strathclyde schools % (n=7,504)
Argyll and Bute	0	1
Ayr	19	11
Dumbarton	13	15
Glasgow	25	37
Lanark	26	20
Renfrew	17	16

Table C.4 Types of courses studied by adults in schools

	% Standard / 'O'-grade	% Higher	% SCOTVEC	% non-certificate
our sample*	8	25	47	20
schools in Scotland**	15	19	25	41

* In our sample, 13% of respondents failed to identify the level at which they were studying. Adults are counted once for each subject taken.

** Adults are counted once for each subject taken. Figures are derived from *Statistics on Adults in Education* (1991 figures).

In our sample, non-certificated courses appear to be under-represented. A possible explanation for this is that SCOTVEC modules are attracting more adults who, in past years, would have taken non-certificated courses rather than courses leading to an examination. Modules also appear to appeal to learners who in the past might have taken 'O'-grade or Standard Grade courses. Many schools, of course, are now offering modules as replacement for these.

Table C.5 Subjects studied by adults in schools

	our sample %*	schools in Scotland %**
English	10	10
Modern languages	8	8
Mathematics	8	6
Business subjects	24	18
Computing subjects	8	6
Science subjects	5	5
Technical subjects	10	3
Social science subjects	6	8
Home economics	5	15
Creative and aesthetic	12	13
Physical education	4	10

* Adults are counted once for each subject taken

** Adults are counted once for each subject taken. Figures are derived from *Statistics on Adults in Education* (1991 figures)

Appendix D: Members of Project Advisory Committee

Mrs Marian Docherty	HM Inspectorate, SOED
Mrs Judith Duncan	Research and Intelligence Unit, SOED
Dr Alan Brown	Principal, Lauder College
Mr Anthony Cooke	Senior Lecturer in Adult and Continuing Education, University of Dundee
Mr Ian Graham	Principal, John Wheatley College, Glasgow
Ms Maria Walker	Community Education Service, Tayside Regional Council
Ms M Teale	Community Education Service, Lothian Regional Council
Mrs Joyce Cannon	Secretary, Scottish National Council, WEA

*The Scottish Council
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